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*Sky Blue Aster (Symphyotrichum oolentangiense) Q. Edwards*

October 2023

# SEEDLINGS

Wild Ones|Kalamazoo Area Chapter

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



*Seeds of Hairy Wild Petunia (Ruellia humilis) Q. Edwards*

Dear \*|FNAME|\*,

The [leaves are falling](#), the forbs are flopping with seed-laden heads, and the sun goes to bed earlier and earlier. It's the season of letting go, slowing down, stoking inner fires with soups and warming beverages. But here comes a heat wave! Let's get out and collect some seeds while they are nice and dry for the [PDL Seed Library](#). Read more below.

Wondering what's up with that plague of defoliating Spongy Moths? Ilse gives us the scoop and tells us how we can reduce their numbers and their impact.

Elections for our chapter executive committee are coming up next month and we need you. Please reach out to [Ann Fraser](#) to get involved.

It's time to get out your date book - this month's program by [Tom Small](#) is going to be very special. I hope to see you there.

Wishing you a bountiful harvest and good cheer,

**Mel Luna**  
*Editor*

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## When is Natural Landscaping Truly Natural?

**Wednesday, October 25, 7:00pm-8:00pm**

*with Tom Small, Professor Emeritus, Western Michigan University*

Don't miss this thought-provoking presentation at the Portage District Library with our chapter co-founder, Tom Small. At ninety years young he is an elder in every sense, and will be sharing wisdom and perspectives gleaned from his long life. Join us at 6:30pm for socializing & refreshments. Read more [here](#).



"The Golden Age" Lucas Cranach the Elder (1533)

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**If you've missed any of our previous presentations, not to worry.**

Visit the KAWO YouTube channel, where you can view our programs 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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## Building the Network: Information and Input About the Many Aspects of the Asylum Lake Preserve

Lauri Holmes



The Asylum Lake Preservation Association (ALPA) invites you to the community hall of the [\*Disciples of Christ Church\*](#) on Winchell Avenue, **Saturday, October 21st, from 1:00 to 4:30 PM**, for an information and feedback meeting. Our goal is to build a network of people who understand the many facets of the Preserve and the challenges that it faces.

*Bergamot (Monarda fistulosa) at Asylum Lake. M. Luna*

Topics covered will be: who actually owns the Preserve and who governs it; what is the current situation with the proposed car wash; what was the story of the Winchell Avenue parking debate; what's happening with WMU's Business Technology and Research Park Phase 2 (BTRII), Gibbs House, the water remediation project, the proposed zoning ordinance changes; what other threats are potentially on the horizon and what can the community do to protect this community treasure?

Community involvement has been crucial in keeping the Preserve a preserve, and a well-informed network of supporters will continue to be crucial. Join us for this afternoon of information, and to give your input on what you see as important for ALPA to know as we plan future projects and pledge to keep the community informed about situations where your support will be needed.

Formal registration isn't necessary, but if you could let us know you're coming we can plan for the set-up of the community hall. A quick [email](#) to me would be helpful but not required.

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## **Nurturing Nature, Building Community: Donate Your Native Plant Seeds**

**Quyen Edwards**, KAWO member and PDL Seed Library Coordinator

The PDL Seed Library is looking for donations of native plant seeds! We have already started collecting seeds from the PDL Monarch Waystation which contains full sun plants, so we are especially looking for seeds for shade and rain gardens. Library staff and volunteers are busy packing these seeds in envelopes to share with the community starting December 1<sup>st</sup>.

Due to time constraints, we really appreciate receiving seeds that have already been cleaned, but we will accept any donations. Please fill out one [donation form](#) per seed type and return it to any library service desk at the Portage District Library (300 Library Lane, Portage, MI 49002). Seeds are shared with the community; you do not need to live in the PDL service area to participate. [Learn more](#).

*Portage District Seed Library Q. Edwards*



## Spongy Moth Outbreak in Kalamazoo and Surrounding Counties

Ilse Gebhard

After moving to Friendship Village in March of 2021, I started walking the paved paths in the five-acre second growth wood lot that is on the property. That spring, and the following, I found a few Spongy Moth (formerly known as Gypsy Moth) larvae. Friends in other parts of Kalamazoo County, and in Van Buren and Barry Counties, had been seeing major outbreaks of this introduced moth species known to defoliate trees. Was the Village Woods heading for such an outbreak?



The answer became clear this spring when I found many Spongy Moth larvae on my forays into the Village Woods. Hearing cuckoos in the woods throughout June was another indicator of an outbreak, as cuckoos love to feed on hairy caterpillars and feed them to their young. But the severity of the outbreak only became apparent in July when the moths were emerging from their cocoons.

*Fifth Instar Spongy Moth Caterpillar I. Gebhard*



Almost overnight, there were many tan/brown moths fluttering around. They were male Spongy Moths trying to home in on the females that emit a very strong pheromone to attract the males. While the females have white wings, they can't fly and crawl only a short distance from where they emerged from their cocoons on trees or shrubs.

*Cocoons of female (top) and male (bottom) Spongy Moth. M. Zubrik*



*Male and Female Spongy Moths USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org*



*Female Spongy Moth on Egg Mass M. Luna*

Once a male Spongy Moth has located a female, they mate and the female lays a single egg mass. Depending on the size of the egg mass they can have more than 1000 eggs. Egg masses are tan and covered with a dense mat of fine hairs from the body of the female. The eggs overwinter under the mat.



In spring the Spongy Moth eggs hatch and the tiny larvae, less than ¼ inch in length, emerge from the mat and climb up the tree or shrub and out to the end of a branch. They then drop down on a silk thread that they themselves produce. They dangle in the air and wait to be dispersed by the wind. This process is called ballooning and used by other moth species as well. The long hairs on their bodies makes them buoyant and aids in their wind dispersal.

*Just-Hatched First Instars Bugwood.org*

While oaks are the favorite host trees for Spongy Moth larvae, if the ballooning larvae land on one of more than 300 tree or shrub species, they start feeding. If not, the larvae will climb up and go through their dispersal behavior again. Most larvae end up feeding on trees less than 100 to 150 yards from where they hatched. Studies have shown, however, that the young larvae can be carried by the wind as far as a half-mile from the egg mass where they hatched.

Like butterflies and moths in general, Spongy Moths have larval stages, called instars. As the larvae eat and grow, they outgrow their skin and need to shed it to grow any further. The male molts five times and the female six. The first instar is black but the characteristic blue and red warts can be discerned in subsequent instars and become very prominent in the last instar. The fully grown female

larva is bigger than the male, 2.5 to 3 inches versus 1.5 to 2.5 inches. The same size difference is found in their cocoons and in the adult moths, with the female considerably larger.

Spongy Moths, like with so many introduced species, have few natural enemies in North America and their population can build up exponentially. Pathogens, both fungal and viral, have been introduced to North America to help control Spongy Moth populations and can help keep them in check for a few years but so far have not prevented an occasional major outbreak. The pathogen populations have to grow exponentially, as well, before they eventually can quell an outbreak. There also is a tiny Chalcid wasp that parasitizes Spongy Moth eggs but again the wasp's population has to grow, along with that of the moth, before it can help contain an outbreak. I did not see any evidence in the Village Woods of the Spongy Moth larvae being affected by either the fungal or viral disease this spring. Therefore, another outbreak is expected next year. So far defoliation has been light but trees can be killed by consecutive years of heavy defoliation.

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/spongy-moth-life-cycle>



### **Spongy Moth Control - What YOU can do!**

Scrape the egg masses into a container and burn or bury them, or cover them with soapy water for two days and then dispose of them in the garbage. You could also flush them down the toilet, soapy water and all. If you don't do the soapy water treatment, at least double bag them in sealed baggies and throw that into the garbage.

I have found over the years that a solid container is easier to use than scraping them directly into a baggie. [Read more](#)

*Photo credit* Above Left: fresh egg mass. Above Right: old egg mass from which the caterpillars have already emerged.

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## **Community Events of Interest**

**October 7 - 1:30pm-4:00pm:** Stewardship workday at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute: Invasive Shrub Control. [Read more.](#)

**October 14 - 6:00pm:** Trail walk with Slow Bell Trio, an improvised concert of ambient music in the Kleinstuck Preserve. [Read more.](#)

**October 16 - 6:30pm-8:30pm:** "Medicinal Botany: Exploring Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Western Laboratory Science" an in-person presentation hosted by River City Wild Ones (Grand Rapids). [Read more.](#)

**October 17 - 5:00pm-7:00pm:** "Meadowbrook Mushrooms and Fluorescent Fungi" walk and talk at the Shirley Hines Land Trust at the Meadowbrook Nature Preserve in Indiana. [Read more.](#)

**October 17 - 6:30pm:** "All You Need is Love: Holding Biodiversity Close in a Changing World" an in-person presentation by Dr. Rachel Love hosted by the Kalamazoo Area League of Women Voters at Friendship Village (1400 North Drake Road, Kalamazoo), in the Keystone Room.

**October 19 - 5:30pm:** "Social Hike at Spirit Springs Sanctuary" hosted by the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy (SWMLC). [Read more.](#)

**October 19 - 7:00pm:** "Pints and Native Plants" is a monthly in-person meet-up at Brewery Outre. [Read more.](#)

**October 21 - 10:00am-12:00pm:** "Learning the Land Fall Hiking Series" at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute. Oak Woodland Walk. [Read more.](#)

**October 21 - 1:00pm-4:30pm:** "Building the Network: An Afternoon of Information and Input About the Many Aspects of the Asylum Lake Preserve" hosted by the Asylum Lake Preservation Association at 2208 Winchell Ave. More info in the article above.

**October 25 - 7:00pm-8:00pm:** "When is Natural Landscaping Truly Natural?" a monthly presentation hosted by Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones at the Portage District Library. [Read more.](#)

**November 4 - 9:30am-12:00pm:** Stewardship workday at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute: Seed Collection and Processing. [Read more.](#)

**November 4 - 1:00pm-3:00pm:** "Learning the Land Fall Hiking Series" at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute. Landscape History Hike. [Read 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.

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**SEEDLINGS** is edited by Mel Luna. It appears mostly monthly.  
The next regular issue will arrive in November. **Deadline for the November issue is October 20.**

[Send Submission](#)

Contributing Editors:

Ilse Gebhard

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

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

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



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