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*Pasture Thistle (Cirsium discolor) with Tiger Swallowtail in my front yard. M. Luna*

September 2023

# SEEDLINGS

# Wild Ones|Kalamazoo Area Chapter

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



*A Black Swallowtail (Papilio polyxenes) Caterpillar. M.*

*Luna*

Dear \*|FNAME|\*,

The Black Swallowtail caterpillar you see in the photo above has pupated and will remain in their chrysalis, looking like a dead leaf, until next spring. Did you know that Michigan does not have a state butterfly? Advocates of the Black Swallowtail would like to change that. Read more on the how and why [here](#).

September is a busy month for KAWO programs, with the annual [fall plant exchange](#) (Sat, Sept. 9), a [field trip to Sarett Nature Center](#) (Sat, Sept. 16), and our [monthly presentation](#) with Mike Klug speaking about soils (Sept. 27). I also hope to see some of you at Brewery Outre for our first ever Pints & Native Plants meet-up on Sept. 21st!

What could be more fun than harvesting milkweed seed? The [Wild for Monarchs](#) group needs it, so don't hesitate. Ilse is back with two articles featuring a native plant and the flower loving wasps who gravitate to it. Read more about all of this below.

The end is the beginning,

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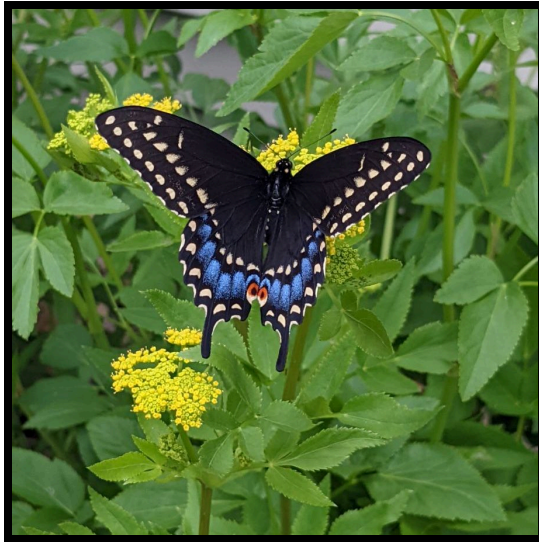
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**Mel Luna**

*Editor*



**Contact Wild Ones**



*Black Swallowtail Butterfly on Golden Alexander (Zizia aurea) Q. Edwards*

## **Annual Fall Native Plant Exchange!**

**September 9, 1pm-5pm at Jessie and Bill's Home**

Next weekend is our final plant exchange of the year! Don't miss this opportunity to mingle, swap, and share in the adventure that is gardening with native plants. [Details here.](#) You are welcome to bring refreshments to share as well as friends, family, and your extra native plants!



*Fall Plant Exchange in 2021 M. Luna*

## **Wildflower Seasonal Grand Finale**

**Saturday, September 16, 10:00am-12:00pm**

**with Nate Fuller**, Executive Director, Sarett Nature Center



The wetland wildflowers of Sarett will be putting on the last great show before the end of the growing season. For those considering a rain garden, this will be a nice introduction to late-season blooming options. Lots more information [here](#).

As always, this event is free and open to the public. See you there!

*Sarett Wetlands Boardwalk N. Fuller*

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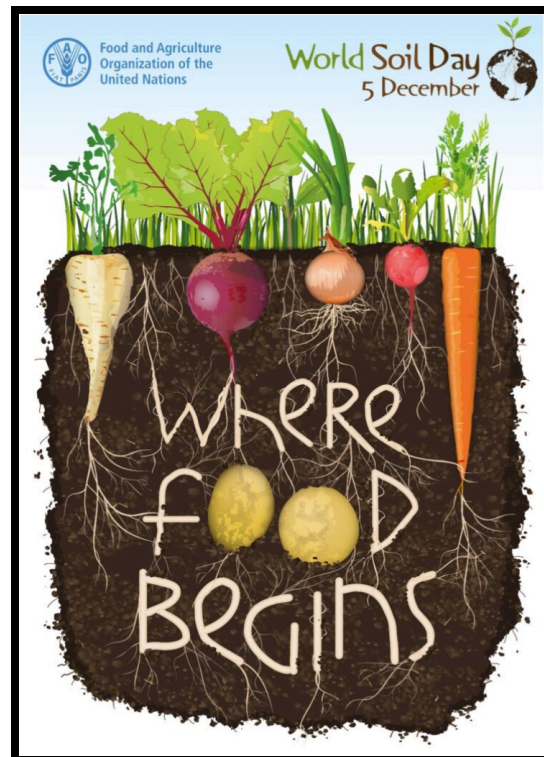
## Healthy Soils Lead to Healthy Food and a Healthier Environment

**Wednesday, September 27, 7:00pm-8:00pm**

*featuring Mike Klug, Professor Emeritus, Michigan State University*

When you sit down at the dinner table, your topic of conversation is most likely not centered on the soils where your food came from. Yet the soil is fundamental to all terrestrial life forms, which includes our own. Historians remind us that soil erosion and degradation led to the loss of many past civilizations. Fortunately, progress is being made to slow soil degradation through changes in tillage practices, use of cover crops, precision farming and more ecological approaches to soil management. In my presentation we will discuss healthy soils and how can we improve them. [Read more.](#)

*Image courtesy of fao.org*



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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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## **Common Mountain Mint:** **Tiny Flowers, Mighty Nectar Source**

Ilse Gebhard



Common Mountain Mint, also known as Virginia Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum virginianum*) is an herbaceous plant in the mint family. Plants in this family are characterized by square stems, opposite leaves that are entire or toothed, and have two-lipped open-mouthed tubular flowers.

*Common Mountain Mint Flowers R. Schipper*

In Common Mountain Mint the leaves are narrow and entire and the flowers are white with purplish spotting. It grows best in sun to part shade and in mesic to wet soils, to a height of 1 to 3 ft. It does spread somewhat by rhizomes, so give it some space. Like most plants in this family, the foliage has a strong mint fragrance when crushed or disturbed.



Common Mountain Mint is native to the eastern US and of the six Mountain Mint species listed for Michigan on the [Michigan Flora website](#), Common Mountain Mint is the only common one. It is fairly distinctive as the angles on the square stems are usually copiously pubescent, meaning hairy, and the sides have no hairs or only a few small ones. A 10x loupe is helpful when trying to see these distinguishing features.

While the flowers of Common Mountain Mint are tiny, they are visited by many insects, including bees, wasps, flies, small butterflies and beetles. Large size does not always mean might. Here is to Common Mountain Mint power!

*Hairy stem edges help with identification. R. Schipper*

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## **No Milkweed, No Monarchs: Seed Collectors Needed**

**Mike and Carol Klug**, Co-Chairs of the Wild for Monarchs Group

By planting milkweed and other nectar plants, you conserve not only Monarchs, but all pollinators. The Wild for Monarchs group of our chapter strives to conserve Monarchs by distributing educational material and seeds, and by growing and distributing milkweed plants at various venues throughout the year. *You can help us by collecting seed for us so that we can continue these efforts.* Some of you are already doing this, which is greatly appreciated. Hopefully you already have milkweeds growing in your yard or have permission to collect seed from sites that you visit.

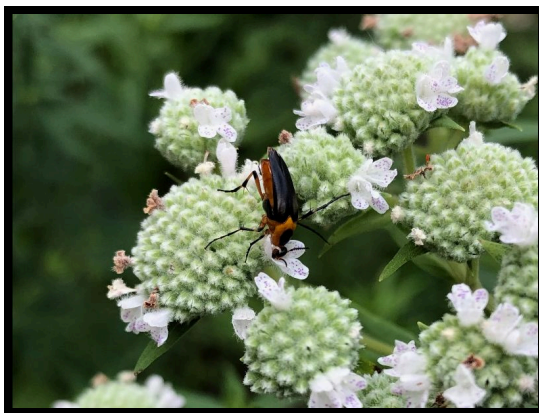
Collection of seed pods and cleaning of seed is easy. [Click here](#) to learn more!



We are particularly interested in Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) and Rose (Swamp) Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*), but will take any species native to Michigan. **Cleaned seed can be brought to one of our membership meetings.** [Contact Mike or Carol Klug](#) if you have questions about the collection process or ways to get seed to us.

## **Important Pollinators: Not-to-be-Feared Wasps**

**Ilse Gebhard**



Even a small garden of four native shrubs and fifteen native herbaceous species can attract a variety of interesting and important pollinators. One such plant species is Common Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum virginianum*) that I have growing right next to the sidewalk where I can reach it with my phone to take photos of any pollinators.

*Wedge-Shaped Beetle (Macrosiagon limbata) with head buried in a Common Mountain Mint flower. M. Luna*

Of particular interest to me have been three largish wasp species using this plant as a nectar source. The three wasp species that I have found and identified so far are Fraternal Potter Wasp (*Eumenes fraternus*), Common Aerial Yellowjacket (*Dolichovespula arenaria*), and Great Black Digger Wasp (*Sphex pensylvanicus*). While all three species are “vegetarian” as adults, feeding largely on flower nectar, they are fierce predators on other insects to feed to their larval stages.

What makes these three species of wasps so interesting to me is their differences. The Fraternal Potter Wasp and the Great Black Digger Wasp are solitary nesters while the Common Aerial Yellowjacket is a colonial nester. They also differ in the nests they build and the prey with which they provision their nests.

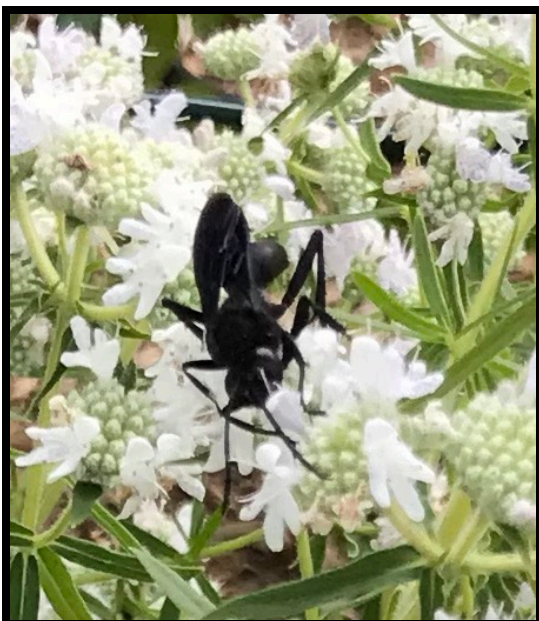


*Fraternal Potter Wasp* I. Gebhard



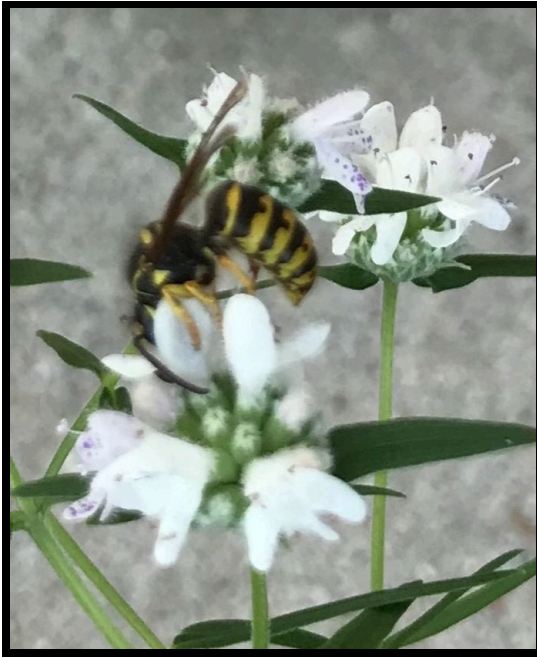
*Potter Wasp pot.* R. Schipper

As the name indicates, the Fraternal Potter Wasp female builds a miniature pot made out of mud, frequently on a twig or even a man-made structure. She provisions the pot with a caterpillar, lays an egg in the pot and seals it with more mud. When the egg hatches, the larva feeds on the caterpillar, pupates, and overwinters in the pot at the pupal stage.



The name of the Great Black Digger Wasp again indicates the kind of nest the female builds. She digs about a foot beneath the soil and creates a series of tunnels using her mouth and spiny legs. Each tunnel is provisioned with an insect in the Orthoptera order (crickets, katydids, and grasshoppers) upon which she lays an egg. When the egg hatches, the larva consumes the prey, pupates, and spends the winter underground.

*Great Black Digger Wasp* I. Gebhard



As with the previous two species the name of the Common Aerial Yellowjacket indicates the kind of nest it builds. In natural areas its nests are found in trees and shrubs, whereas in urban or suburban areas, its nests are often found on buildings.

Unlike the other two species that are solitary nesters, the Common Aerial Yellowjacket is a social insect. In spring a fertile queen emerges from hibernation and chooses a nesting site. In early summer she builds a papery nest into which she deposits eggs. When the eggs hatch, she feeds the larvae and continues laying eggs.

*Common Aerial Yellowjacket* I. Gebhard



Most of the young become workers that take over the care of new young and the expansion of the nest. The insect prey the workers seek to feed the larva is more varied than for the other two species and is pre-chewed into fragments. While most of the young become non-reproductive workers, some become males and some new queens. The individual cells are completely enclosed within the outer envelope of the nest.

*Common Aerial Yellowjacket* G. Gonthier

In the fall the new Common Aerial Yellowjacket queens mate and seek shelter in which to hibernate for the winter. This could be in covered natural locations such as tree stumps and hollow logs, although they may also choose man-made structures for shelter. Males die soon after mating and the old queens and workers are killed by the cold weather in the fall.

Just the word “wasp” or “yellowjacket” makes some people fearful of being stung. In general, there is nothing to worry about unless you disturb their nest, when they do become aggressive. There was no indication of aggressiveness of these individuals as I got close to them to take their photos. But all three, as well as some other species, like their “sweets” and it is best not to leave an open can of pop sitting around outside, unattended, and then take a sip. A fat lip may result!

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## Pints & Native Plants

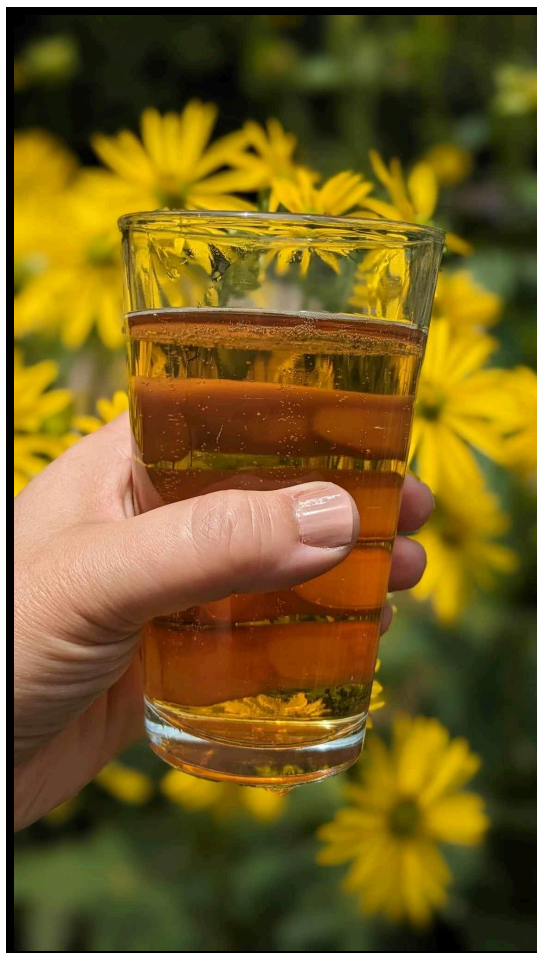
Hosted by Quyen Edwards, Mike Weiss, and Mel Luna

We are starting an informal meet-up group one Thursday a month to have a drink together and talk about native plants, challenges in our gardens, pollinators, and more. This will be a time to chat and get to know other native plant enthusiasts and KAWO members. For more formal presentations, we recommend the monthly programs starting up again at the Portage District Library.

The meeting place is Brewery Outre which is located in the Harrison Circle building. Learn more about one of Kalamazoo's newer tap rooms [here](#). Brewery Outre has limited parking spaces reserved specifically for its patrons since it is also a residential building, so it's best if people try to carpool. If you cannot find a space in one of the designated spaces, you can park across the street at the Waterstreet building. Brewery Outre is also a bring-your-own-food establishment, so feel free to bring dinner or have it delivered.

**Our first meet-up will be Thursday, September 21st starting at 7:00 PM.**

Mark your calendars for additional dates through 2023: October 19th, November 16th, and December 14th. We look forward to seeing you there. Cheers!



## Community Events of Interest

**September 2 - 9:00am-12:00pm:** Volunteer workday with Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy at Spirit Springs Sanctuary. [Read more.](#)

**September 6 - 2:00pm-4:00pm:** Volunteer workday with KAWO's Community Projects at KPS. [Read more.](#)

**September 9 - 1:00pm-5:00pm:** Annual Fall Native Plant Exchange hosted by Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones. [Read more.](#)

**September 13 - 6:00pm-8:00pm:** "Eat Your Invasives" series at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute: Autumn Olive. [Read more.](#)

**September 15 - 2:00pm-4:00pm:** Volunteer with KAWO's Community Projects at Glen Park. [Read more.](#)

**September 16 - 10:00am-12:00pm:** "Wildflower Seasonal Grand Finale" field trip to Sarett Nature Center, hosted by Kalamazoo Area Wild Ones. [Read more.](#)

**September 18 - 6:00pm-7:30pm:** "Native Plant Restoration at Kent County Parks" is an in-person program at Millennium Park, hosted by River City Wild Ones (Grand Rapids). [Read more.](#)

**September 21 - 7:00pm:** Join us for the inaugural "Pints and Native Plants" monthly meet-up at Brewery Outre. Share a local beer with other enthusiasts whose eyes light up (instead of glaze over) when discussing all things native plants. Open to all!

**September 23 - 2:00pm-4:00pm:** River City Wild Ones (Grand Rapids) is hosting an informal garden tour at a Wild Ones member's house. [Read more.](#)

**September 27 - 7:00pm-8:00pm:** Join KAWO for our monthly program, "Healthy Soils Lead to Healthy Food and a Healthier Environment" at the Portage District Library. [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 October. **Deadline for the October issue is September 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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