



Twin Cities Chapter Quarterly Newsletter

May 2012 Volume 10, Issue 2

Upcoming Events/Monthly Meetings

MONTHLY MEETINGS

(Meetings at the Wood Lake Nature Center: social at 6:30, meeting to start promptly at 7:00. Free and open to the public)

Tuesday, May 15, 2012: Capturing the Beauty of Native Plants with Photography, John Maciejny, Natural Images Photography. Learning how to photograph the subtle beauty of native plants takes time, patience and the right tools. Join John Maciejny in the classroom and outside in the Woodlake Nature Center to learn how to capture the beauty, form and color of these plants. He will share techniques and tips with a slide presentation, demonstrations, and handouts. Bring your digital or film camera for some hands-on practice.

Spring Plant Sale. Order Deadline: Wednesday 9 May (all pre-orders must include payment). Plant pick-up: Sunday 20 May, noon to 3:00 pm, 4009 Minnehaha Ave. So. If you can't make the scheduled pickup, please call our message center (612-293-3833) or send an email to sale coordinator, Marilyn Jones: Marilyndjones@gmail.com.

The Wild Ones Twin Cities' 6th Annual Native Plant Sale offers flats of plants for rock gardens, perennial flowerbeds, and rain gardens, plus "All Season Butterflies", "All Seasons Bumblebees" and "Baby Bird Feeder" flats. Additionally individual favorites such as prairie smoke, meadow blazing star, cardinal flower, columbine and prairie dropseed, to name a few, may be ordered separately. More information may be found at the following web site: <http://www.wildonestwincities.org/p/plant-sale.html> or go to our message center (phone number above). If you are not able to pre-order, don't despair. Some plants will also be available for purchase on the pick-up day.

Summer Tours: Our summer tours concentrate on visiting gardens and restoration projects that use native plants and watershed friendly techniques. If you have ideas, questions, or want to carpool, contact Marfilynn Torkelson at (612-293-3833). Information and new developments, as well as information on other local tours will be posted on our website calendar: www.WildOnesTwinCities.org. If you don't have internet access contact us by using the Wild Ones Twin Cities phone number shown above.

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Monthly Meeting and February Conference Notes

Maintaining Native Plant Landscapes: Paul Erdmann (Maintenance Program Manager, Natural Shore Technologies, Inc.).

When determining the maintenance approach to your garden the first step is to come up with goals for your property with the ultimate thought being – what you want your landscape to look like. Here there are a number of options: formal perennial garden; natural wild areas; preserving a remnant native community; a low maintenance garden; or high diversity to name a few. To assist in this, you could take a survey of the area to determine: (1) the current state of the site; (2) the history of the site; (3) the existing plant and soil communities; (4) the presence of invasive plants; and (5) the condition of the surrounding area (i.e. know what your neighbors have and work with them). To help assure that your goals are fulfilled keep records by looking at your area during different seasons and monitoring its condition, then recording your observations and maintenance actions.

Usually when maintaining an area the following actions are involved:

1. Spring Clean Up. Cut down and remove or mulch up last year's growth. This stimulates new growth and gives the area a cleaner look. Try not to strip the entire area bare, but leave some material for insects and larger wildlife. Some leaves and debris left over create a nice thatch that act as free mulch and decompose turning to soil over time.
2. Watering as required. This is essential the first year where one inch of water per week should be the goal. If we are not getting adequate rainfall, give new plants a thorough soaking as needed. The second year and thereafter natives shouldn't require watering except during periods of extreme drought. Remember natives typically have deep roots the growth of which you wish to encourage by not watering excessively.
3. Physical and structural maintenance may be required over time. For example, as nature remolds the landscape, rills and gullies may need to be repaired.
4. Controlling invasive plants. Monitor and know your plants as to when they flower and seed. With this knowledge one can determine which of the following actions to take with regard to controlling invasives:
 - a. Mowing and cutting. The weed whip is a great tool for this especially in small sites and steep and/or uneven terrain.
 - b. Hand pulling. Highly effective on small infestations and small sites. If seeds are present be sure to remove the material from the area, disposing of it properly.
 - c. Burning. Do this in the fall or the spring. This is very effective in stimulating plant growth and controlling weeds. Use trained personnel and get permission from the proper officials. For small areas one can use a propane torch to target individual plants. For this have water handy and do not burn in windy or dry conditions.
 - d. Chemical applications. Should use only after considering the other alternatives and, if one does decide to go this route, try to use it in combination with other methods. Research to determine the best herbicide for a given plant and be sure to read ALL the labels. Wear



Maintenance activities - Photo from Paul Erdmann

safety gear when applying and try to prevent drifting of the applied chemical into other areas (avoid spraying on windy days).

e. Integrated pest management. This is a combination of some or all the techniques above, and will prove to be the most successful in native landscapes over time. In general how you rid your area of invasives depends upon the plant itself as well as the natives that are present. There are (1) Annual weeds: These plants flower, produce seed and die in one growing season. Here the goal is to break up the reproductive cycle. Note that annuals usually are not a problem once natives become established. (2) Perennial weeds: These are more persistent as they spread by seeds and rhizomes. They are difficult to eradicate so here you need to think more in the long term with regard to removal and you may need to use a greater arsenal – hand pulling, fire, chemicals, etc. (3) There are also cool season invasives which have the advantage since they are already well established as warm season natives commence to grow. You need to fight these invasives in the spring or fall, and monitor these plants throughout the growing season.

February Conference:

Editor's Note: For those of you who were unable to attend the Conference, it is hoped that this summary of presentations will give you some indication of the abundance of information from the really great speakers who shared their knowledge and enthusiasm with us.

Uncommon Facts About Uncommon Birds: Stan Tekiela, Naturalist, Wildlife

Photographer and Writer. This presentation was filled with information on birds that we have all heard of or encountered with interactive discussions on our perception of each of these birds – a tale of good bird/bad bird. It started with a few birds that most of us would classify as “bad” such as the brown-headed cowbird. This species is widely known for its opportunistic use of other birds’ nests. Basically it deposits its eggs in other bird species’ nests letting them take care of their chicks’ upbringing. However, instead of just moving on the cowbird in actuality helps protect this nest from predators. So what appears on the surface to be a terrible act, in actuality may be a benefit to both species.

Other birds such as the starling and the house sparrow are considered “bad” because they were not here when the settlers first arrived. Looking around the room it was noted that most of us did not have ancestors that could be traced back to periods even before the mid 1850’s. Yet we considered ourselves as part and parcel of the landscape. Could not the same be said of birds and other species that had been here for over 100 years and who are doing no harm to the balance of nature? Food for thought!!

He also dwelled upon the intelligence of some birds that we generally dislike such as the pigeon which has a magnificent homing instinct. This bird was domesticated about the same time as the dog way back when and has been used to carry messages for centuries. Another is the crow, which lives in well defined family units, are cooperative hunters, can use tools and are able to do problem solving.

After giving insights on the life and habits of a number of birds and how little we truly knew about many, he left us with the following to ponder: If we can’t truly understand nature, how can we “manage” it?

Conservation of the Future: Challenges Presented by Climate Change: Jessica

Hellmann, Associate Professor of Biological Sciences, University of Notre Dame. This presentation centered around our changing world and how our management and stewardship also needs to change as a result. First, to set the stage, from the perspective of science there is no doubt that gases (in particular CO₂) are

increasing in the atmosphere and affecting our world – the ecosystem is feeling this change in spite of the political controversy about its existence.

Why should we care??!! Almost all our goods and services can be tied back to nature, from cleaning water, to pollination, timber, and spiritual sustenance to name just a few.

So how is and will nature cope? One can look at past temperature fluctuations for some indication (although the predicted future CO2 concentrations have not been found in past history for which there is current information).

- Timing of key events as seen through phenology are changing for some species (for example, lilacs are flowering 1 to 2 days earlier).
- Changes in abundance (which can be either a decrease or an increase in numbers).
- Opportunities for some organisms and problems for others (winners and losers).
- Movement of species. It has been observed that species have moved approximately 10 miles laterally per decade and 40 feet upwards per decade.

However, there are limits to species adjustments (impediments)

- Rapid rate of climate change may not allow enough time for alterations/adjustments to take place.
- Habitat loss and fragmentation by agriculture and urbanization make it difficult to find suitable habitat.
- Natural limits may be present that impede dispersal and colonization.

Humans are stewards of the earth. This coupled with the difficulties for species as presented above means we need to consider what our role should be in this. Some ideas were then presented which are listed below with the caution that there was no endorsement of any of these. They are presented to help advance the conversation and thoughtfulness that should take place. It needs to be remembered that nature is complex so some solutions may work for one species and not for another – or in one place but not another.

- Conservation as we know it: i. e., using the traditional conservation tool box:
 - Fighting invasive species;
 - Keeping natives as robust as possible;
 - Establishing and maintaining nature preserves;
 - Prioritizing land acquisition (identifying spots and deciding how to protect them)
- Fighting the tides of change: For example we may want to water trees that exist in a certain location if moisture is lacking due to climate change.
- Putting things in the right place: Taking species out of an historic area and moving them to areas projected as suitable for the species.
- If you build it they will come. Building corridors to link up areas to allow natural movement.
- Put away for safe storage: Ex-situ conservation such as using seed banks, placing in zoos or establishing game ranches.

Lastly our role as citizens and gardeners in this time of change was reviewed:

- Make your garden as wildlife friendly as possible
- Coordinate with others (neighbors in particular) in establishing nature friendly areas
- Talk to your local, state and national representatives
- Read about the situation and use that knowledge to educate others
- Discuss and debate with others



CLIMATE CHANGE PERSPECTIVE:

At the onset of the industrial revolution CO2 concentrations in the atmosphere were 200 ppm. In 2008 it was 390 ppm and continuing to rise. The prediction is that by 2100 concentrations could be 550 ppm (with a temperature increase of 3.5 degrees F) to 900 ppm (with an increase of 10.5 degrees F). Note that when looking at all existing data to date, CO2 has never been above 300 ppm.

Pollinators: What They Do For Us and What We Can Do For Them: Elaine Evans, Entomologist, University of Minnesota.

At the onset of this presentation the importance of bees was stressed. Thirty-five percent of the global food supply depends upon pollination by bees and other insects/animals. In general pollination (which is the delivery of viable pollen from male to female (stigma) parts of a plant), provides faster ripening, increased yield; more uniform crops; bigger fruits; and fruits with greater oil content.

Bees: Order Hymenoptera – 7 families, hundreds of genera and 20,000 species (4,000 in US and about 200 in Minnesota).

Although much of the pollination by bees is done by non-native species, native bees are important because they:

- Provide an alternative or supplement to pollination by commercial honey bees.
- Pollinate many crops not pollinated by commercial bees. (It is estimated this is worth \$3 billion worth per year.)
- Pollinate native plants.

With regard to bee decline, it is known that compared to pre-1980 they have decreased by 52% in Britain and 67% in the Netherlands. The status of native bees in the US is unknown. However, it is known that there are fewer honey bees here with a 50% decline in managed hives and at least a 70% decline in feral colonies. There is also evidence of bumblebee decline. There a number of factors that could be contributing to colony collapse:

1. Disease/pathogens such as (a) Israeli Acute Paralysis Virus, (b) a new strain of Nosema which is a fungus that affects the digestive system, and (c) Invertebrate Indescent Virus, Type 6
2. Pests: parasitic flies, tracheal mites
3. Poor diet
4. Insecticides
5. Fungicides
6. Stress



Photo by Julia Vanatta

Looking at threats to native bee biodiversity (out in the wild) indicates they have some of the same problems as well as:

1. Habitat loss which is having an overall negative affect
2. Invasive species which likely are reducing floral resources causing bee populations to suffer
3. Emerging diseases mentioned above under colony collapse
4. Pesticide use. Mentioned here again because it is known that every pollen load a bee brings home has at least 4 different pesticides in it.
5. Climate change which causes (a) loss of synchronization between plants and insects, (b) range contractions, expansions and shifts, and (c) possible alteration of nutritional rewards

Generally there are a number of things that we might do to help improve the situation. As always creation of a bee friendly landscape and reduction of pesticide use assists survival. Bees will drink nectar from almost any plant, so having a variety of plants that bloom throughout the year, means there will be a lot of pollen/nectar available. (Note that they are not attracted too much by red flowers.) Some trees that are especially beneficial include maple, willow, alder, oak, locust, basswood and fruit trees. Flowers that were mentioned included the mustard family, legumes

(clover), mint, asters, and goldenrod. The creation of nests sites was also discussed. To help provide nesting opportunities, remember that different species have different needs

- Underground solitary bees: (1) Keep some areas of bare soil; (2) maximize untilled areas; (3) clear plants off of well-drained soil
- Social bee nests: (1) retain or create tunnels; (2) protect snags where possible; (3) make wood nests (switch nests every 2 years to reduce pests & pesticide residue. (For tunnel nest construction see <http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/tunnel-nest-management-xerces-society.pdf>



Bee Nest. Photo by Julia Vanatta

Breaking the Rules: Ecological Design for the Real World: Larry Weaner, Natural Landscape Designer and Consultant, Larry Weaner Landscape Associates. The concluding presentation offered a different approach to landscape design. One that considers ecological science when analyzing a site and developing a plan for a garden. Using a traditional approach we may be doing lots that is counterproductive. In Mr. Weaner's opinion it is time to consider how we could do a better job. As one creates a design this requires a better understanding of the surrounding habitat (i.e., where the plants grow in nature) and the evolving process of the garden area through time.

One should be looking for plant communities (i.e., groups of plants that have found complementary niches). This is accomplished by taking the observable parts of a natural landscape and applying them to your garden areas. For example culver's root in a meadow doesn't need staking as it often does in one's garden, because in a plant community its base is supported by smaller plants. So one needs to understand how species grow and how they are distributed in nature. Using this one should select some keystone plants to stabilize a site and cover most of the square footage. Also remember that there is constant competition and vegetative stability is not unchanging. The rate at which it changes defines stability. One needs to think about the natural succession processes that could take place in a garden.

Traditional landscape practices that one might alter were proposed.

1. Plant spacing – look at nature and not the textbook.
2. Planning for compositions that alter over time. Need to think about using plants that will occupy spaces as other plants develop. (For example one may want to plant early succession meadow species along with plugs of long-lived herbaceous plants and trees which will develop as the garden progresses.)
3. Planting: Using natives means that supplemental nutrition is rarely needed. Tilling and soil amendments should also not be done. Try and select a planting season that (a) favors desired plants over weeds; (b) considers the lag time between disturbance and planting; and (c) decreases watering needs
4. Plant purchasing considerations
 - a. Nursery culture: Avoid perfect plants. Typically their roots aren't strong (as they are fertilized, watered and generally babied) which means additional work is needed to help these plants survive in your garden.
 - b. Management not maintenance: Allow your garden to be fluid and change over time

5. Manage a landscape intensely at the early stages of the garden – once the plants are established it will be easy to manage as the weeds will be suppressed.

In the end always ask the question: What will happen if I do nothing??

Invasive Plants to Watch Out For

Editor's Note: As part of the January 2012 monthly meeting, Paul Erdmann listed a few invasives threatening native landscapes and discussed techniques for dealing with them in one's garden. In lieu of a featured native plant, some of these non-natives are highlighted. Plant description, threat and additional information on containment are taken from the Minnesota DNR web-site: www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives.

*Note: Below when herbicides are suggested as a means of control, consult the DNR website for what to use. Also one is legally obligated to control plants listed below as **prohibited controlled (noxious) weeds**.*

Birds Foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*)

Description: Twelve – 24 inch high plant with three clover-like leaflets on a short stem and two additional leaflets at the base of the stem. The yellow, pea-like flowers are usually found in clusters of 3 to 12. This plant blooms most of the summer. Seeds are one-inch long pods. This species originally from Europe was introduced for erosion control purposes and as a forage crop.

Threat: Forms dense mats choking and shading out most other vegetation.

Control: Try to keep this plant from seeding. Can hand pull by finding the central part of the plant. Can spot spray with herbicide. Burning increases seed germination so don't use this maintenance method.

Crown Vetch (*Coronilla varia*)

Description: Two to 6 foot long stems with a reclining and trailing growth pattern. Leaves are pinnately (featherlike) compound, with 15 to 25 pairs of oblong leaflets. The flowers are clustered in flat-topped umbels ranging from pink to lavender to white. They are found on extended stalks which grow from the leaf axils. This plant blooms from May through August. Seeds are contained in finger-like pods. They can remain viable in the soil for 15 years. This species was introduced from Europe and southwest Asia during the 1950s as groundcover and for erosion control.

Threat: This is a serious invader of prairies and dunes.

Control: Due to the long viability of this plant's seed one needs to think of this in a long term time scale with regard to controlling it. Fire, hand pulling, and spot spraying affected areas may need to be used.

Leafy Spurge (*Euphorbia esula*)

Description: Two to 3½ feet tall. Stems, flowers and leaves emit a white milky sap when broken. Leaves are alternate and oblong to lance-shaped on the upper part of the stem and scale-like on the lower portion of the stem. The flowers are small, borne by showy, yellow-green bracts found at the top of the stem. They bloom from June into the fall. Seeds remain viable in the soil for up to 7 years.

Threat: Primarily a threat to moist and dry prairies and savannas. It is most aggressive in dry soil conditions. This is a **prohibited controlled (noxious) weed**.

Control: Can dig up the root system; burn in conjunction with a herbicide; or use a biocontrol agent (root-boring beetle, four root mining beetles, shoot-tip gall midge).

Canada Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)

Description: Two to 5 feet tall with slender grooved stems that branch only at the top. The leaves are alternate, smooth, oblong, tapering and directly attached to the stem. They are deeply divided with prickly margins. There are

numerous small purple flowers found at the top of the stems between June and September. The seeds are light brown and tufted for wind dispersal.

Threat: Found in prairies, savannas, glades and dunes where it spreads quickly replacing native plants. This is a **prohibited controlled (noxious) weed**.

Control: Can mow, hand pull or use herbicides. Repeating pulling and mowing weakens the roots. Mow when the flower buds just open. Can spot apply a herbicide.

Wild Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*)

Description: Plant spends one or more years in a rosette stage, blooms under favorable conditions and then dies. The plant is six inches high in the rosette stage and 4 feet high on stout grooved stems in the flowering stage. The alternate leaves are made up of 5 – 15 egg-shaped leaflets along both sides of a common stock. The leaflets are sharply toothed or lobed at the margins. The yellow flower is a flat topped cluster which blooms from June to late summer. The straw colored seeds are small, flat, round and slightly ribbed. They are viable in the soil for 4 years.

Threat: Once established it can severely alter native habitats. This is a **prohibited controlled (noxious) weed**.

Control: Dig up small plants or hand pull. One can cut the plant below the root crown before the seeds set. One can also mow or cut the flowering stem base to prevent seeding. Can use a herbicide in early spring or late fall through spot application, if possible. Note that it resembles the Golden Alexander. Also the juice from the plant can cause severe burns so wear protective clothing when handling.

Common Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*)

Description: Three feet tall (up to 5 in shady areas). A single stem branches extensively toward the top into short stems forming a flat topped cluster of numerous button-like yellow flowers. The leaves are alternate, pinnately compound and are irregularly lobed. The daisy-like flower discs are up to 0.5 inches wide, blooming from July through October.

Threat: This is a **prohibited controlled (noxious) weed**. It spreads by seeds and short rhizomes.

Control: Dig up, cut or spot spray with herbicides.

NOKOMIS NATURESCAPE VOLUNTEER GARDENERS.

Encouraging People to Connect with Nature by Growing Native Plant Gardens

NEW! Wild Ones Summer Tuesdays at Lake Nokomis. Meet at the Naturescape on the 3rd Tuesday of the month - June 19th, July 17th and August 21st from 6 pm – 8 pm. Come early at 5 and bring a picnic supper to enjoy by the lake. At 6 we will tour the gardens and talk about what's in bloom. At 7 we'll get our hands dirty with some garden maintenance. The evening will be topped off with a lakeside sunset. A lovely way to contribute to the beauty of the park!

The **Nokomis Naturescape (NN)** is a 4-acre native planting, providing a model of sustainable landscaping. NN is an official **Monarch Waystation** and **National Wildlife Federation Backyard Habitat** site located on Lake Nokomis in Minneapolis at 50th St. and Nokomis Parkway. NN is part of the **Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board** system.

Volunteer Support. Special note to Wild Ones members – the Nokomis Naturescape is the Twin Cities Wild Ones adopted native plant landscaping project. Share and expand your native plant enthusiasm by gardening at the Naturescape. Naturescape gardeners meet Tuesday early evening during May – September from 6:00 - 8:00 pm.

Growing Monarch Habitat Workshop. May 26th 10 – 11am at the Nokomis Community Center, 2401 East Minnehaha Parkway, Minneapolis. The workshop is a beginning how-to approach to gardening for monarchs.

With an image-rich discussion we will cover:

- Monarch butterfly life cycle, migration and required habitat needs
- Native plant benefits
- Introduction to the native plants in the Monarch Gardens-to-Go

- Resources for learning more about native plants and monarchs

About The Monarch Gardens-to-Go

- Includes 12 plant gardens (in 3.5" pots) to get your monarch garden started.
- All selections are locally native plants.
- Additional Garden-to-Go kits may be available at the workshop.
- Each kit contains an informational brochure with plant specifics, planting template and native plant resources list.
- The kits are available for 2 different soil conditions

Please call or email to pre-register by May 18th for plant kits (\$20).

For more Naturescape and Growing Monarch Habitat information, to volunteer or receive event emails, contact Vicki Bonk at 612-727-3562 or vbok@usewireless.com

THANK YOU WILD ONES! Last year was wonderful growing season with a number of garden improvements realized with the support of many Wild Ones members. We added a pathway through the Lakeside Garden – a long sought improvement realized with the help of Twin City Landscape Design. The 2011 **Minneapolis Monarch Festival** was a resounding success with an attendance of 7 to 8000 people of all ages and diverse backgrounds enjoying a sunny day at the **Nokomis Naturescape**. The festival is a unique opportunity to highlight the benefits of native plants. For more info visit monarchfestival.org.



NN planting. Photo by Vicki Bonk

Gardener's To-Do List (May, June, July)

Spring has sprung and we hope you are enjoying signs of your garden coming to life. Here are a few reminders as the gardening season gets into gear.

- * The garden centers and native plant nurseries have opened their doors - do you have a list of your plant wants yet?
- * Start turning your compost pile, if you have the energy Or a helper!
- * A little time spent weeding early in the spring while weeds are tender will save you extra work later, when the weather is hotter.
- * After the ground has warmed, spread 2-3 inches of mulch on beds to help conserve water and reduce weeds.
- * Keep an eye out for the return of wildlife: dragonflies, caterpillars and hummingbirds, to name a few.
- * Water any newly planted seedlings during drier periods to help them get well established.
- * Cut off dried seed heads of spring blooming flowers. Save seeds for propagating next spring or direct sow now.
- * Do you remember thinking any of your plants were a bit leggy or just too tall last year? Pinch them back to encourage denser, shorter growth - and with more blooms, too!
- * In May start moving out seedlings that you germinated indoors over the winter. Gradually accustom them to their new surroundings.
- * Divide crowded clumps of late summer and fall bloomers as shoots emerge from the ground.
- * If you have a small prairie garden, burn, cut or mow (with mower at a very high setting from the ground) as needed.
- * Don't get so busy with your gardening work that you forget to enjoy the beauty of your native plants, while sitting in the shade sipping an iced tea. Your back needs a break.



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MEMBERSHIP

Benefits To You

- Monthly meetings featuring excellent presentation on a wide array of native landscaping topics.
- Receive the new member packet, including our handbook full of information and activities on natural landscaping.
- Receive the bi-monthly Wild Ones Journal, with articles and information to inspire and educate you about natural landscaping.
- Free admission to most Wild Ones' events, such as our garden tours, and native plant walks and sales/swaps.
- Reciprocity with other chapters' meetings.
- Share experiences and expertise with other like-minded native gardeners.
- Access to the Wild Ones library of native landscaping books.
- Support for the Wild One's Mission.
- Membership dues and donations are tax deductible

Join or Renew

1. Sign up at meetings, or
2. Call Marty Rice at 952-927-6531, or

3. Access the national website at www.for-wild.org



Twin Cities Chapter

c/o Marty Rice

4730 Park Commons Dr. #321

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OUR MISSION

Wild Ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities. Wild Ones is a not-for-profit environmental education and advocacy