

Wild Ones 2022 May Gatherings

Home of Lori Stringer

In 1994, when Lori Stringer moved to the Oakland Woods property, the one-third acre house lot was fully developed. It had over forty trees with a dense canopy of sweetgum, pin oak, and cedar, and featured a goldfish pond, eight raised beds, and French drains. Over the years the grounds went through a number of transformations. Early on she added a swimming pool, which occasioned removing several trees as well as the raised beds. At that time Lori's planting goals were for year-round color and fragrance. "Pest-free" and "low maintenance" were key words she looked for in catalogue descriptions. The move toward native plants was evolutionary, introducing butterfly plants, redbud, and fringe tree with local non-native favorites such as hostas, peonies, and smoke trees. After reading an article about bush honeysuckle in the [Missouri Conservationist](#), Lori began to systematically remove invasive plants. She started by pulling the seedlings that were growing outside the fence, a place where they flourished. Though the plants were removed, Lori expects there are more lurking out there. Vinca and English ivy still manage to creep under the fence from the easement, so it's an ongoing effort. She has developed a plan whereby she leaves the weeded places bare for a season or two to see what pops up.

As with so many of us, serendipity helps shape our efforts. At a pond store Lori learned of a pond tour sponsored by the [St. Louis Water Garden Society](#). There she met Chris Siewing, owner of Re-Create Nature, whose own pristine pond inspired Lori to replace her troubled pond with, not one, but two ponds, one of which replaced the swimming pool. Saved plants found new spots around the water and yard. Lori urges caution when planting near the coping or edge of ponds because plant roots will seek water. These edges should be monitored to keep roots outside the liner. In 2012 Lori planted the cypress and birch trees that are on opposite ends of the pond.

Another serendipitous event was meeting Sue, who had a most beautiful yard. The plants were nice, but what drew Lori was the movement of birds and bees, butterflies and dragonflies. Her own yard was quiet and still with only occasional wildlife visitors. Sue identified the yellow birds as goldfinches, who were dining on the coneflower seeds, and she gifted Lori with native coneflower seed from her yard. Lori now seeks plants that are attractive to birds and butterflies. At the same time, she realized that she still had some invasive plants—not to caterpillars' tastes. Sue also made a gift of [Bringing Nature Home](#) to Lori, who, after reading it, fully understood why she didn't have any nesting birds—she didn't have "baby bird food."

Loving plants and ponds, Lori enrolled in the [Horticulture Department at STLCC Meramec](#). The department is a hub for disseminating information about seminars, current events, and learning and volunteer opportunities. It was there that Lori was introduced to Wild Ones in 2018. The recent loss of several mature trees changed the condition of several of her planted areas. The combination of heavy equipment crushing and cutting the roots plus the soil compaction during the pond installation proved to be too much stress for the trees closest to ponds. Three pin oaks and a redbud were taken down in 2014. The arborist left the snags and some limbs to use as path edges and seating. The loss of the canopy flooded the previously shaded garden with full sun. Some plants, like the astilbe, bugloss, and hostas, had to be moved. Meanwhile, the spiderwort, hibiscus, and pink primrose got unruly, seeding and spreading outside their boundaries. Lori loves being surprised in the garden; she's incorporating succession principles in the design management to achieve a controlled randomness.

After reading Tallamy's book and joining Wild Ones Lori's aesthetic evolved, as did the criterion for choosing which plants found a spot in her yard and how to care for them. She celebrated her 2019 retirement by ordering nine different bundles of whips from the MDC nursery and enrolling in a full load at school. Lori is much appreciative of the Wild Ones members who have generously shared their knowledge, plants and backyards with her. She welcomes your continued advice (Hint hint 😊)

Below is a list of the native plants on the property and approximate year they were planted. Starting at the southeast corner nearest the street, the line of travel is east to west to the sidewalk and backyard. Lori listed the backyard plants in order of appearance while traveling clockwise on the path. She includes a disclaimer, warning that-some species may not have survived winter or moved around affecting the accuracy of the list.

Mailbox, Perimeter and Foundation beds

Aromatic aster 2000

Swamp oak 2019

cypress 2018

False indigo 2019

redbud?

purple coneflower and liatris 2000.

Side yard beds

Coneflower St John's wort 1995

switchgrass

Backyard gate and pergola

Coral honeysuckle early 2000

Beauty berry and spicebush 2019

zizia and packera species 2019

pipevine vine pitcher plant and bittersweet 2020

Lower terrace

Black cherry tree 2019

cliff solidago and bush poppy mallow 2020

Garden phlox and Palm sedge 2000

Eastern wahoo 2019

Baptisia and amsonia 2018

purple poppy mallow 2000

West path

Coralberry 2000

Sassafras, Nannyberry, Arrowwood and Aromatic sumac 2019

Red buckeye 2020

Pagoda dogwood 1995

Northwest gate

Hairy mountain mint 2018

Smooth sumac and Witch hazel 2019

Upper path

Lead plant, Chokeberry, Chickasaw plum and Serviceberry 2018

Choke cherry, Helianthus species and Texas green eyes 2020

Spiderwort 2005

Orange butterfly plant, Hibiscus and Evening primrose 2012

Aster species 2021

Monarda, Downy skull cap, Blue lobelia, Cardinal flower 2018

Meadow rue 2012

East path

Crested iris, Sensitive fern, Indian pink, Anemone and celandine poppy 2020

River birch 2012

Heuchera, Jacob's ladder and Joe pye and Partridge pea 2020

Path to gate

Milk weed, Curly top iron weed, and Hibiscus 2019 Black-eyed Susan, Palm sedge, River oats, Buttonbush, Sweet spire, and Winterberry 2018

Goat's beard and Jewel weed 2020.

Pond plants listed clockwise starting at the waterfall

Cattail, Arrowhead, Soft rush, and Pickerel plant 2012

Hardy canna 2021

Bulrush and Blue iris 2012

Center path

Baptisia, Amsonia, Missouri primrose, Rose verbena, Columbine, Pink muhly grass, and Flame flower