

The background of the cover is a photograph of a garden. A stone path leads through a dense garden of various plants. In the foreground, there are numerous pink and yellow flowers, likely coneflowers, with bright orange centers. The garden is filled with green foliage, including tall grasses and leafy plants. In the background, there are trees and a wooden lattice fence. The overall scene is vibrant and natural.

Wild Ones

NATIVE PLANTS, NATURAL LANDSCAPES

FALL 2023 • *Journal* • VOL. 36, NO. 3

A voice for the natural landscaping movement.

Free Identification Apps and Community Science Projects



Barbara A. Schmitz

The days are getting shorter and that means my time spent on my backyard deck, sitting in a glider with my laptop as I work on the Wild Ones Journal, is coming to an end, at least for a bit. My backyard is my favorite place to work, and not just in my garden.

There's something about working outside and hearing birdsong, or about glancing up to see a tiger swallowtail or monarch flutter by. It doesn't make work seem like work. It's relaxing, almost comforting. You notice things that otherwise would go unnoticed.

That's the premise of Chris Helzer's "Hidden Prairie." Helzer, director of science for the Nature Conservancy in Nebraska, spent a year photographing life in a square meter plot. And by the end, he had taken pictures of 113 species of plants and animals. But he was most impressed by the beauty he found in that small area.

So impressed with Helzer's story (and subsequent book), the Wild Ones Loess Hills Chapter created their own Hidden Wild projects using old mailboxes, notebooks and more, open to chapter members or the public. People are asked to stop by one of their sites and contribute their observations. What an amazing way to encourage people to really look at a small area and appreciate the beauty that can be found there!

Those projects are part of community science, and Janet Allen, co-founder and current president of the Wild Ones Habitat Gardening in Central New York Chapter, writes that now it is more important than ever to contribute and help researchers document plant and animal lifecycle events and learn in the process. She also includes an extensive list of Free Identification Apps and Community Science Projects that can be found on the Wild Ones website.

This issue of Wild Ones Journal also contains great examples of what chapters and chapter leaders are doing to promote native landscaping, including developing partnerships with like-minded organizations. And it offers so much more: from stories to help you create your native garden to help it thrive, to stories on snakes, bees and cacti.

So, if it's a nice day, grab your laptop or iPad and head outdoors to your deck or porch to read this issue of the Journal. And take the time to enjoy and really observe all that nature has to offer.



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Established in 1977, Wild Ones is a national not-for-profit organization of members who teach the benefits of growing native plants and work together to grow and restore natural landscapes.

Wild Ones' definition of a native plant:

A native plant is a species that occurs naturally in a particular region, ecosystem and/or habitat and was present prior to European settlement.

Partners for Native Landscaping united

By Scott Woodbury

In 2011, five organizations in the St. Louis area came together as Partners for Native Landscaping (PNL). Wild Ones St. Louis (Missouri) Chapter, currently the largest in the country, was providing native plant grants to nonprofits and hosting monthly gatherings in native plant gardens. St. Louis Audubon Society was developing Bring Conservation Home, a program that provides on-site ecological landscaping consultation and certification to land stewards in the St. Louis metro region. The Missouri Department of Conservation provided technical assistance to communities and partner organizations to help citizens protect fish, forests and wildlife. They also promoted conservation-friendly development practices in urban settings. Shaw Nature Reserve developed the Native Plant School, a series of hands-on classes in the Whitmire Wildflower Garden, to educate homeowners and professionals. And Grow Native!, a program of the Missouri Prairie Foundation, was developing a network of classes, native plant fairs and workshops across Missouri, to increase conservation awareness of native plants and their effective use in urban, suburban and rural developed landscapes.

The first five organizations were soon joined by the Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District that was developing its green-infrastructure stormwater initiative, Project Clear, which offers grants for rain gardens. Then came BiodiverseCity, a community networking initiative of the Missouri Botanical Garden, to promote, protect and plan for biodiversity throughout the greater St. Louis



In 2023, PNL added a native plant fair and sale to its offerings.

region. And lastly, St. Louis Community College-Horticulture, which was developing native landscapes on campus and training the next crop of professional horticulturists. Today, these eight organizations and their combined activities account for most of the native landscaping outreach in the St. Louis area. Their

programs and events are full of enthusiastic audiences.

For years the annual PNL event was a day-long in-person workshop with a capacity of about 250. It was mostly attended by “the choir.” In 2019, Doug Tallamy was the keynote speaker who made us all proud with this statement: “You know I’ve talked



Partners for Native Landscaping (PNL) gives presentations to educate people about the importance of native plants.

all over the country. There are groups doing good things [in other states] – but St. Louis is leading the way! You have so many groups and programs – some doing this work longer than me – using native plants to restore ecosystem function to human-dominated landscapes. That’s what it’s all about, and you guys are leaders!”

Then came COVID: as happened for many, the PNL workshop went virtual. The St. Louis County Library, one of the largest circulating libraries in the country with branches across the St. Louis area, became a terrific collaborator. In late winter of the past four years, PNL has provided about 10 virtual presentations through the library’s system. These are free and advertised to the hundreds of thousands who access the library. Hundreds of people can view each live presentation, plus each is recorded and made available on the library’s YouTube channel. With more than

5,000 live and recorded views each year, PNL is now reaching far beyond “the choir.”

In 2023, PNL became a three-part event: an in-person workshop held at Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center, a plant fair and sale held at Beyond Housing, a local community development center, and the virtual speaker series, hosted by the St. Louis County Library.

The development and success of PNL has been both the cause and effect of the increasing interest in native landscaping in the St. Louis region. Native plant nurseries are selling out of plants...by early May. Classes and programs from partner organizations are always full. Large institutions and organizations are creating native landscapes in their “front yard.” There are dozens of small businesses that design, install and maintain native landscapes across the region, and many nurser-

ies producing native plants and seed.

Over the past five years, 1,000 new rain gardens have been built with municipal and state funding. There are 400+ Wild Ones St. Louis and 50+ Wild Ones St. Charles Area memberships, 400+ registered Homegrown National Park native gardens, 70+ Grow Native! professional members, and 200+ certified Bring Conservation Home gardens.

PNL has demonstrated the synergistic effect of partnering with organizations to deliver our shared missions.

Scott Woodbury founded the St. Louis Chapter of Wild Ones 25 years ago. He developed the Whitmire Wildflower Garden for 30 years from its inception in 1991. He currently teaches Native Landscaping Practices at St. Louis Community College and owns Cacalia Design and Wilding, a consulting and landscape design business in St. Louis.