

Join us on Facebook @ [LAKETOPRAIRIEWILDONES.ORG](https://www.facebook.com/LAKETOPRAIRIEWILDONES.ORG) and our website at www.laketoprairiewildones.org

Greetings!

By Sandy Miller/President, Lake to Prairie Chapter

It makes me smile when I think about the Lake to Prairie Chapter of Wild Ones. We revived this chapter in 2011 with the intention of focusing on environmental education. At that time, there were 45 members; today we are over 100 strong!

We have had some great speakers at our monthly membership meetings and last year we presented an outstanding native landscaping conference, the first for this chapter. Our presence and education in the community at local events and in schools has continued to carry out the Wild Ones mission to promote environmentally sound landscaping practices and preservation of biodiversity by the establishment of native plant communities.

It is now time to take the next step and introduce our Lake to Prairie newsletter. We want to bring articles from the environmental experts and past

Goldenrod Galore

By Meredith Tucker/Citizens For Conservation

Is there a more maligned plant than goldenrod? It's blamed for causing hay fever when the culprit is really ragweed. (Insect-pollinated goldenrod has heavy, sticky pollen that adheres to bees and butterflies while ragweed pollen is wind-borne and flies through the air to bedevil your nostrils.) Goldenrod is sneeringly derided as a roadside weed; however, gardeners, home owners, lovers of flowers and bees and butterflies and all things environmentally healthy, take note. Many of our native *Solidago*, goldenrod, species are for you.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Greetings from the President	1
Goldenrod Galore	1
Creating Awareness	3
Monarchs in the Classroom	4
Yes, You <u>Can</u> Help Monarchs	4
To Pull or Not to Pull	6
Lake to Prairie Bulletin Board	7

presenters along with information, pictures and updates about our chapter. More than that, we want to invite you to share with us. This forum will be a great way to reach a large audience for questions/problems you may have, information or helpful hints you would like to pass along or topics you would like to see addressed.

This newsletter is another way to share and educate – we hope you will join us in our newest venture and with your help and involvement, we can watch it grow!

Two species give goldenrod its bad name; they are tall and Canada goldenrod, *Solidago altissima* and *S. canadensis*. When you see massed fields of tall, spindly goldenrod or you see it along the road, one of these two species is the culprit. These are fine plants as part of a mature prairie or a high-quality restoration. They offer the same ecosystem services as the other goldenrods, providing pollen and nectar for pollinators and habitat for other insects, birds and small creatures. The galls on goldenrod stems are evidence that goldenrod gall

fly larvae are making homes inside. Chickadees and downy woodpeckers open the galls and eat the larvae.

These plant species become problematic in backyards and prairie gardens because there is little competition either above ground or below to keep them in check. Such rhizomatous species can become invasive. They spread rampantly outside their proper ecosystems. Don't let these two species get started in your yard, or you will regret it! Now think about all the wonderful goldenrod species you can plant and enjoy!

Everyone recognizes goldenrod. All species have profuse, yellow flowers on mostly erect stems. They fill many habitats: sun and shade, wet and dry. There is a species of goldenrod to inhabit any spot in your garden plan, and it will be easy to establish and well behaved. All are in the Aster family (Asteraceae) and bloom in late summer to mid-fall. All serve the pollinators and other native creatures. You just need to choose the proper species for your specific location. Here are a few beautiful goldenrods that are indigenous here.

One of my favorites is **showy goldenrod**, *Solidago speciosa*. This is a savanna plant that is sometimes found on prairies. It will thrive in light shade and in full sun. It does well on drier sites and, like most natives, won't need watering once it is established. Its tiny bright yellow flowers are arranged in dense club-shaped clusters at the top of reddish stems. Although it does have rhizomes, it never becomes aggressive. Showy goldenrod is an absolute bumblebee magnet with up to sixteen bees on a single inflorescence (a cluster of flowers). I have also seen it attract an amazing number of monarch butterflies at one time (when there were monarchs to attract). Blooming at about the same time as New England aster, its yellow flowers and the purple aster blossoms create a stunning display while they provide vital nutrients for migrating butterflies and for bees foraging for their over-wintering queens.

This is not an invasive species of goldenrod; it seems to stay where it is planted and is quite long-lived. Try it; you'll like it!



Solidago speciosa – Showy goldenrod

Another of my favorites is **blue-stemmed goldenrod**, *S. caesia*. It grows in the shade and blooms from late summer to autumn. In natural settings, it grows in black oak savannas and rich woods and is associated with sugar maple and American linden, but it grows and blooms beautifully under my chinquapin and bur oaks. It reaches up to 3' tall in clumps and does not spread aggressively. It has arching, greenish-blue stems and tiny, bright yellow flowers in loose clusters along the stems. It is distinctive and easy to identify.



S. caesia – blue stemmed goldenrod

Another nice species that accepts some shade is **elm-leaved goldenrod**, *S. ulmifolia*. It is frequent in oak woods, but mine has taken over some areas of prairie garden in full sun. I find it to be more aggressive than blue-stemmed, but not as

assertive as the aggressive tall and Canada goldenrods. Elm-leaved grows to 3' tall on erect stems. Like the other species, it is beloved of bees and other pollinators.



S. ulmifolia - elm leaved goldenrod

Stiff goldenrod, *S. rigida*, thrives in average, well drained soil. Its appearance is unique with tiny, bright yellow flowers borne in dense, erect, flat-topped clusters. It may grow from 3–5' tall. I've read that it can be weedy because it has rhizomes, but I've never encountered a problem with it in my yard. Finally, **Ohio goldenrod**, *S. ohioensis*, is a lovely goldenrod for wet areas. It grows from 3–4' tall and has the largest of the goldenrod flowers, putting on an exuberant late season display. It will grow in moist clay as well as good garden soil.

Creating Awareness

By Mali Chiodi/Prairie Crossing Charter School, Grayslake

Spring is finally here in Lake County and, hopefully, we'll be seeing butterflies in our yards. To help with that, I have been asking people in my community to commit to 1 square foot of space in their yard to plant native plants to attract butterflies.

I live in Prairie Crossing, am in eighth grade and I'm completing my Culminating Project (CP) which has been a two year assignment that encourages students to do something to assist and help society, the

economy or the environment. My CP was to create awareness about the decrease in the butterfly population and to teach people how they can help. I have presented this information at our school and to the kindergarten classes to teach young children about the importance of planting the right plants to attract butterflies. I am passing out bags with information on native plants and seeds to our neighborhood and to neighbors in Grayslake and am writing articles for the local newspaper and the Lake to Prairie chapter of Wild Ones.



Kindergarteners show off their handiwork

Living in Prairie Crossing and attending the Charter School has made me more aware of how I can make a difference by learning about the land and the environment and showing others that small steps can make a difference. I have been helped along the way by many people who gave me information and incentive.

As spring continues to bloom, please consider expanding your current gardens with a milkweed plant or flowering native plants to attract butterflies. It only takes one plant to make a difference and to allow a butterfly to have a place to eat or lay eggs. This is a small investment that can make a big impact in Lake County and beyond!

Monarchs in the Classroom

By Maria Sinagra/Teacher, St. Joseph School, Round Lake

A few years ago, the Archdiocese of Chicago created and implemented a Science curriculum designed to engage students through pursuing an active role in the learning process. Here at St. Joseph School, our 4th grader's life science unit revolves around the Monarch butterfly. Last year, the students investigated the growth and migration of the Monarch through observation, reading/writing activities and collaborative projects. It was extremely exciting because not only were the students able to observe the Monarchs in the classroom and ultimately release them to begin their journey to Mexico, but we were able to create our very own Monarch Waystation. We were very fortunate to have a parent volunteer who reached out to Pam Wolfe of the Lake to Prairie Chapter of Wild Ones to help make this possible. It was through their efforts that the students were able to build their own garden on school grounds which enabled them to harvest leaves from their own milkweed plants to feed the caterpillars. Ms. Wolfe returned to help us tag our Monarchs before releasing them for



New Waystation!



Tagging Migrant Monarchs

their migration to Mexico. Overall, students seem to thoroughly enjoy these learning experiences and feel that we all need to do our part to help the scientists figure out how to increase the Monarch population which includes all schools having the educational opportunity they have had. Since the life science unit ended, I have heard students talk about visiting the Journey North website to monitor the migration patterns and how they have taken what they learned in the classroom to share with family members – including the planting of milkweed.

I feel that they will take the knowledge they have gained in the classroom and continue to do their part to save the Monarch for future generations.

Yes, You Can Help Monarchs

By Mich Dittman/Monarch Committee

All you have to do is plant milkweed.

I could let it go at that, but I do run on... So, I'm going to include some rearing tips in hopes you will give raising monarchs a try. They die in droves if left in the wild to fend for themselves, so give them a break and collect what eggs you find. They will appreciate the climate controlled buffet you furnish them and cause much joy when you finally release the end result of your labors. And your kids (grandkids, neighborhood kids, etc.) will love it, too. Promise!

Not kidding about the milkweed – plant as much as you can. My personal favorite is *Asclepias incarnata*,



swamp milkweed, because it's easy to grow, gardenworthy, easily pulled out if you feel it over seeded and caterpillars LOVE it. Be certain you have untreated plants – beg, borrow, steal from poison-free friends because many outlets sell plants treated with herbicides that kill the cats. Need I mention that your insect host plants should be pesticide/insecticide free?

Eggs are most often laid on the underside of leaves and are conspicuously white. Collecting the eggs is the surest way of raising a cat that has not been parasitized, so I aim to get them before

one of their many natural enemies gets them first. I harvest the incarnata leaves that have eggs and lay them on a damp paper towel in a plastic container with a tight fitting lid. Holes in the lid are not necessary, but it's a good idea to take the top off daily to check for hatchings and moisture level. Do not let the leaves dry out or mold. Once the tiny black cats hatch, they eat their egg case and begin on the leaves; some move about a fair bit so be vigilant when removing/replacing the lid.

Depending on the number of cats and size of the container, the little guys will be fine in their first home for about a week. They eat very little the first few days, but after their 3rd molt they become eating machines. Do not let them run out of food; they may attempt to pupate too early.

Just about any container will do to raise the growing cats as long as you can keep a lid on it. As they get older, you'll want a porous lid of some kind: netting, hardware cloth, even paper towels will do. If you're using *A. incarnata*, you can cut stems and keep them fresh for a couple of days in florist foam. I've found that foam also works with common milkweed, but it won't keep as long.

Keep the cages clean! Frass (cat poop) and old plant material will mold if left too long. I've found that putting fresh leaves in the cage will cause them to gravitate to that stem which can be picked up and moved to another container while their cage is emptied and cleaned. It's a good idea to take a nose count each time you move the cats around; they can be quite the Marco Polos and will march away if the spirit moves them. Free range caterpillars are not desirable... Wipe the cage down with alcohol and follow with a thorough washing with soap and water to remove the residue to keep everyone healthy. Between broods I use a 10% bleach solution to disinfect all containers.

IF YOUR CATS ARE SITTING STILL FOR LONG PERIODS OF TIME, DO NOT ATTEMPT TO MOVE THEM! They

are probably in the process of molting and are very vulnerable at this time. They will go through this process five times. This does, unfortunately, make the cage cleaning process a bit more difficult... My preferred container for 4th & 5th instar cats is an aquarium lidded with hardware cloth. Office binder clips work great to keep the cloth affixed. When the cats decide they've eaten enough and are ready to pupate, they will normally crawl up to the top, build their button and pupate on the screen. Some choose less than perfect places to pupate such as the glass side of the aquarium or on a stalk of still-being-munched milkweed. Both are bad ideas that can usually be avoided if you put a sturdy fake plant of some kind in a corner of the cage. The idea is to make sure the chrysalis is at least 4" off the floor to give the new butterfly room to hang upside down to dry their wings.

If you use a smooth sided container (such as the aquarium) to eclose ("hatch") your butterflies, you **MUST** cover the floor/sides with screening/paper towels or place fake plants of some kind on the bottom of the container! The butterflies have strong legs when they eclose, but sometimes one will fall and it **MUST** have something to crawl up onto so it can hang down and dry its wings. I cannot emphasize this enough ... it's heartbreaking to have an otherwise healthy butterfly with crumpled wings.

I have used many, many words to describe a simple process and hope I haven't put you off. Raising a couple of caterpillars is easy as falling off a log – 100 cats of the same age all at once is a different story. If you choose to hand raise caterpillars and need any kind of assistance, there is help out here! There are websites and people ready and willing to give whatever aid you need. If you hit the motherlode of eggs and don't feel equipped to handle it, let me know – I'll find them homes and make sure those lucky eggs become migrants in late summer/fall. Questions? Aid? Contact me at michdittman@gmail.com

To Pull or Not to Pull

By Pam Wolfe/Monarch–Membership Committee Chair

Thanks to the cooler, later start to our growing season, many of our favorite native plants are showing up as seedlings this June. Those of us who make it a yearly habit of visiting the local native plant sales and purchasing forbs, shrubs or trees to add to our landscapes know what to expect at the checkout. If you have never purchased a native plant, you might be surprised; they can be rather pricey. Of course, native plants are tough, hearty and reliable unlike many of the expensive non-native ornamental perennial plants purchased and/or replaced yearly by the plant loving public. Native plants are well worth a little extra cash for years of carefree beauty.

So, you're out weeding your native plant landscape and what a mess! Everywhere is clover, lambs quarters, Queen Anne's lace, grass seedlings and, for many of us, baby maple trees. But, hidden among those soon to go "weeds" could be native plant gold. The mature native plants you lovingly purchased and are now taking the time to weed around may have rewarded you with a treasure trove of seedlings. That means future \$ saved if you take the time to look before you pull.

Many seedlings of native plants look much like a miniature of the mature plant such as blue vervain, Ohio spiderwort or elderberry, but others go through several stages in appearance before they become recognizable as the mature plant version. Examples of these would be great blue lobelia, ironweed and common milkweed.

My advice to you would be to list all the native plants in your landscape, especially the forbs, and learn to recognize the seedling version(s). Once you know your favorite native plant seedlings, it will become a yearly treasure hunt for free plants to move around in your own landscape or share with friends and family.

Pam can be reached at florawings@icloud.com

Great online sources for seedling identification:
Central Region Seedling ID Guide for Native Prairie Plants – www.nrcs.usda.gov

Grow Native Missouri Prairie Foundation – www.grownative.org

Illinois Wildflowers – this is a good source of IL native plant information that includes pictures of plant foliage and sometimes seedlings – www.illinoiswildflowers.info

The Tallgrass Prairie Center Seed and Seedling Identification in the Upper Midwest guide written by Dave Williams is an excellent, take along reference book. It's published by University of Iowa Press and is small enough to fit in a backpack.



Don't confuse dogbane with common/Sullivan's milkweed–dogbane on the left has a red stem



Three faces of *A. syriaca* (common milkweed):
 from left – seedling, 1 yr. plant and 2 yr. plant

Lake to Prairie Bulletin Board

Upcoming monthly chapter meetings at Fremont Public Library, Mundelein, IL – the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 – 8:45 p.m.

July 7 – Linda Curtis, teacher, author and sedge hunter extraordinaire will deliver a presentation on carex and share her knowledge and photographs of these graceful, underappreciated plants.

August 4 – Dr. Jeff Hoyer, educator of Advanced Environmental Science and Biology will discuss how prairies developed in N. America (they are found nowhere else on earth!) and how the native vegetation evolved to live there.

September 1 – Dr. Kay Havens, Senior Scientist and Director of Plant Science and Conservation at the Chicago Botanic Gardens will be with us to discuss Plants of Concern.

Special excursions!

July 9 – 6:30 p.m. at the College of Lake County Horticultural Building

Please join us for a planning meeting for the 2015 Native Landscaping Conference! If you can offer ideas and/or help as we plan the upcoming conference, your presence will be welcomed! If you have questions or want more detail, call Sandy Miller at 847/546-4198 or email her at sanran2@aol.com

August 22 – 9:30-11:00 a.m. at Illinois State Beach Park
Don Wilson, ISBP volunteer steward, will lead us on a field trip at the site of the defunct IL National Guard facility – now a historical district. The walk will cover oak savanna, dry sand prairie and wetlands that are home to many rare and beautiful native plants.



Show your support for the Lake to Prairie Wild Ones Chapter AND biodiversity! Our beautiful oak tree design by chapter member Penni Isaacson is displayed on both the tee shirt and the tote.

The tee shirt is a gray poly/cotton blend with green lettering and short sleeves and is available in sizes S, M, L, XL and XXL for \$15.00/shipping included



The tote is 14"x20", cotton twill with a full zipper, double handles and an inside pocket. It comes in bone with green lettering or green with bone letter and is \$17.00/shipping included

Send check or money order payable to Lake to Prairie Wild Ones to P.O. Box 37, Round Lake Beach, IL 60073



If you have an article, question, interesting photo or factoid you would like to share, please let us know at michdittman@gmail.com