



April 2023

photo by Lynda P.

Healing the Earth one landscape at a time

Dear Members of Wild Ones, Smoky Mountains Chapter:



I am humbled to have the opportunity to address such a dedicated and passionate group of individuals who have done so much for our native habitats. Your tireless efforts to promote the importance of native ecosystems have not gone unnoticed. Thank you for the work that you do to provide essential nectar, shelter, and food sources for the diverse wildlife that call these habitats home.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to the Knoxville Botanical Gardens and Arboretum for their partnership with Wild Ones. Their generosity in allowing us to use their meeting space has been invaluable to us. We are excited to report on the exciting projects that they are working on to establish more native habitats in the coming months.

For those who may not know me, I am recently retired from a long career in the IT field. My passion for sustainability and community involvement has led me to work with community gardens, promoting initiatives to replace lawns with native species, and urban homesteading projects. I also founded a litter picking group that did much to mitigate the litter problem in the city in which I previously lived. It was a truly rewarding experience to see how small actions can lead to big impacts in our community.

I am honored to serve as your president and look forward to continuing to work together to protect and promote our native habitats.

Sincerely,

Steacy Sadler Lucchesi

Wild Ones, Smoky Mountains Chapter president

Community Members Prioritize Communication and Native Landscaping

by Regina Santore, vice president

We would like to thank everyone who participated in the Visioning exercise on March 29th, 2023, and the first follow-up meeting on Apr 12. We had three attendees at the follow-up meeting:

- State Park Ranger *Stephanie Mueller*, Seven Islands State Birding Park and also Secretary of the Tennessee Ornithological Society, Knoxville Chapter. She wears all the hats for Seven Islands, from law enforcement to landscape maintenance for the installation there done by Overhill Gardens.
- *Joan Monaco*, of Gardner Monaco Design, an Ecological Landscaping Planning firm.
- *Sandra Korbelik*, Wild Ones member and member of several other organizations such as Native Plant Rescue Squad, as well as <https://advanceknox.org/> which is “an effort to define a vision and create a plan that will guide growth, land use, transportation, economic prosperity, and quality of life in the County for years to come.”

Following is a compiled synopsis of all of the points discussed:

1. We prioritized Communication as a keystone issue for achieving the vision, one that must be started upon immediately;
- a. we talked about mutual letter-writing campaigns among our various groups. Sandra noted that the public input period for the Urban Tree Canopy project is closing soon, and she reiterated a call to action for us all to request native trees be prioritized over non-native trees. “Take a minute to do that here: <https://www.knoxvilletreeplan.org/>”

- b. Joan sees a need for more local growers specifically focused on growing for professional landscape installers; a need for workers and/or volunteers trained to care for seasonal management of native landscape systems (including plant identification, invasive management, etc); and quality public and private demonstrations that show what a carefully designed, well-managed landscape can look like.
 - c. Stephanie and Joan both see a need for native landscape management professionals, Stephanie said, currently, volunteers must be taught for an hour, on arrival. This takes time and resources; properly pre-trained volunteers or professionals are needed. Joan sees an opportunity for professional native landscape maintainers to enter the industry .
2. We agreed that education of the public to tell natives from invasives is a keystone element of the vision, and Wild Ones can:
 - a. host speakers and events for the next year that provide such learning opportunities;
 - b. perform outreach on this topic by speaking at schools, neighborhood meetings, and developing the use of iNaturalist by these groups in the way that Discover Life in America has done; and
 - c. train sets of volunteers from businesses and other community groups to perform basic native landscape maintenance for places like Seven Islands, and/or partner with Ijams Nature Center to do this.
 3. Wild Ones could help facilitate small business incubation in the native plant trade over the next year.
 - Our attendees would like to enter the area of Public/Municipal landscape design. Barriers to this include municipalities not having sufficient education about the benefits of native habitats, nor the knowledge of how to maintain them. Finally, the lack of suitable materials locally is an even greater issue.
 - It was suggested that one way to get municipality and community buy-in would be to do large installations of native plants in conspicuous places. It was also noted that in our Wild Ones National annual meeting call, one of our sister chapters shared photos of a very large, conspicuous planting that they did at their zoo, with large signage for all the groups that worked on it and also explanations of why it is needed. Doing the same at Zoo Knoxville should be a goal.
- I suggested that the City of Knoxville be approached about the idea of becoming “Birdtown USA” with the most diversity of birds and more opportunities for birding, than anywhere else in the interior of the country. Stephanie said that people already come to Seven Islands from all over the country to view birds, and attendance has increased every year. I suggested that those people need more places to go birding in Knoxville so they will spend an entire week here, between Knoxville, Great South Fork and the Great Smoky Mountains. By planting native habitat for support of birds, the City of Knoxville could achieve that goal.
 - We determined that the City of Knoxville, of all local municipalities, is the one most likely to be receptive to the concept of planting native habitat for wildlife, and should be approached immediately. Wild Ones can:
 4. Use the power of these groups to start making inroads at City of Knoxville and Visit Knoxville;
 5. Work to achieve a conspicuous planting at Zoo Knoxville in the next year;
 6. Teach members and coalition group members an “elevator speech” regarding how the lack of native plants specifically harms baby birds (because no one can say they’re against baby birds!) as a quick and gentle way to open people’s minds to the importance of planting natives and removing invasives; and
 7. Cultivate relationships with connected influencers.
- Conclusion:**
- Based on our recent visioning event and the results of our first follow-up meeting, we have determined that we have a great need to educate our membership
- and the public on “Identifying and Removing Invasive Species in your Yard.”
- This would be Step 1 in teaching a body of people in Knoxville how to tell a “bad plant” from

a “good (native) plant,” in line with our 1-year goals for moving East Tennessee toward the 10-year vision created at the original visioning.

With everything we’ve learned, we’re fairly certain we are starting from zero on this issue; knowledge about plants in general seems to be low in East Tennessee, and knowledge about invasives vs. natives appears to be especially low. In a recent poll, our chapter membership indicated that identifying invasive species was a hole in their knowledge. Thus, our next speaker, at our April 26 meeting, to be held from 6 -8 pm at Knoxville Botanical Gardens and Arboretum, will be Bill Moll, who will teach the audience how to identify the most common invasives for our area, how they damage our local ecosystems, why we should care about removing them, as well as the basics of how to remove those species. 🌱

vacant Chair Positions in your Chapter

Your Smoky Mountains Chapter is looking for enthusiastic volunteers to fill the following vacancies in the chapter’s structure: Marketing Chair (develops relationships with press/media and like-minded venues/organizations), Volunteer Coordinator, and Communications Chair (to coordinate campaigns). Please contact Steacy at wildones-smokymountains@gmail.com if you can donate some time to help your chapter be the best



Wild Ones, Smoky Mountains Chapter: Monthly Workshops at Knoxville Botanical Gardens!

We’ve got some great news to share - we’ve reserved the Carriage House at Knoxville Botanical Gardens for our monthly workshop meetings, which will take place on the last Wednesday of each month at 6 pm. Mark your calendars! Each month, we’ll let you know the topic and speaker for the workshop via our newsletter. This month, we’re excited to have Bill Moll talking about “*Identifying and Controlling Invasive Plants.*” Plants out of place are a problem in all regions of the world and can threaten local ecosystems. Bill will frame the issues regarding invasive plants in Ten-



April is Native Plant Month

During the month of April, celebrate native plants by planting native trees, shrubs, perennials, vines and grasses; or... attend a native plant educational event or program: See our upcoming events below

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, April 26th • 6:00 – 8:00 pm
Smoky Mountains Chapter Monthly Seminar: Topic “Invasive plants”

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Saturday, Apr 22nd • 9am – 4 pm
Master Gardener Plant Sale in Sevierville, Sevier County Fair Grounds

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Saturday, Apr 29th • 10 –11 am
Gardening with Native Plants workshop, Meadow View Greenhouse & Garden Center, Lenoir City
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/gardening-with-native-plants-tickets-613406925627>

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Saturday, May 6th, 2023
12:00 pm to 1:00 pm
Knoxville Botanical Gardens Native Plant Sale
Native plants will be featured; WOSMC will have a table there.
<https://www.knoxgarden.org/spring-plant-sale>

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Wednesday, May 31st
6:00 – 8:00 pm
Smoky Mountains Chapter Monthly Seminar: Topic TBA

nessee. This will be followed by a discussion of specific species - how to identify and manage them and suitable alternative species.

Bill has rescued his 3.2 acre property from privet, Japanese honeysuckle, English ivy, nandina and other invasive plants. In his spare time, he has worked on programs and Symposiums for the Tennessee Valley Wild Ones and is on the Tennessee Invasive Plant Council Board.

Can’t wait to see you there!

Did you know? About White Oak Sink?

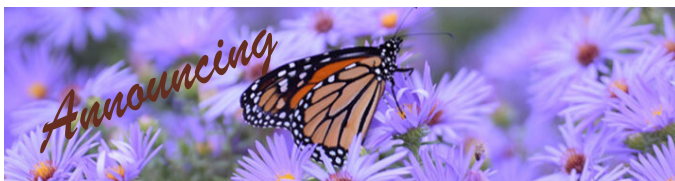
by Lynda Parker

White Oak Sink is a wildflower lover's mecca in the Great Smoky Mountains. Located approximately 2½ miles in from the Schoolhouse Gap trailhead, the trail to the sink is not an official park trail (although park rangers do keep the trail clear of fallen trees). In the sink, hikers are greeted with a carpet of wild phlox, trillium, mayapples, wild ginger, shooting stars, Virginia bluebells, bee balm, and many other wildflowers. Mid-April to late May is the best time to visit the sink to catch the wildflowers at their peak. Visitors are asked to remain on the footpaths to avoid damaging the fragile wildflowers.



footpath in White Oak Sink

Blue phlox and shooting stars



Wild Ones Smoky, Mountains Chapter New Website

Visit our new website where you'll find all the latest news and a schedule of upcoming events. Be sure to bookmark the address and share it with your native plant-loving friends. Also visit our FaceBook page:

 <https://smokymountains.wildones.org/>

 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/698461>

Native Plants, Natural Landscapes
Wild Ones®
Smoky Mountains



Wild Ones/Smoky Mountain Officers:

- president - Steacy Sadler Lucchesi
- vice president - Regina Santore
- secretary - Veronica Brock
- treasurer - Marti Agler
- social media/website - Emma Oxford
- newsletter - Lynda Parker

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 Mission Statement: promote environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities.