



WISCONSIN GARDENS

Fall 2025, Volume 76, Issue 4

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WANTED: WG EDITOR AND ASSISTANT EDITOR!

Joe Powelka, WGCF President

Back in May, our *Wisconsin Gardens (WG)* Editor and Assistant Editor resigned. A call went out to the membership for those interested in taking on the positions and making the magazine their own. Until recently, no one has stepped forward to meet the challenge. We may have someone interested in being the Editor, but that possibility is tenuous. Regardless, we continue to seek someone to serve as an Assistant Editor to help the new Editor. Perhaps two or more people want to serve as co-editors to reduce the burden on a single individual.

Gerianne Holzman stepped up to produce our summer edition, and she did a wonderful, professional job, as she always does. But that was a one-time effort. As NGC 1st Vice-president, she has her hands more than full with national issues.

For the Fall issue, I stepped up and pulled together an abbreviated edition, lacking the polish and sophistication of our previous editors. We have to get certain notices out to our members over the next few months. We will do what has to be done to meet the needs of WGCF. **However, it will soon be necessary to make some hard decisions about the magazine/newsletter.** I do not have the time to be the WGCF President, address the issues central to my term, and edit *Wisconsin Gardens* at the same time.

So, it will come down to you, the readers of *WG*, and the members of WGCF to determine the future of *Wisconsin Gardens*. At some point in the not-so-distant future, *WG* will be no more unless someone takes ownership of its production. *WG* has been in production since 1946, when Ruth West started the magazine as its first Editor. Do we want to end production after 80 years?

A question to all of you, do you read *WG*? Does it provide you and your peers the information you need and expect? Would there be a more useful format for getting the information to you or for promoting discussion and interaction with other WGCF members? Please email me at oneplus@chorus.net and let me know your thoughts on *WG*, how best to communicate with you, and what you want to see and hear. The level of response I get, **or don't get**, will help me in directing WGCF leadership on the future of *WG*.

As I stated at the start of my term, one of my goals is to make WGCF more responsive to our members. If the members do not need or want to support the publication of *WG*, and do not identify a new editor or assistant editor for the publication, it may cease to exist. Hopefully, two or more of you will say that *Wisconsin Gardens* cannot go away, that the publication is an essential tool for WGCF, and you all will step up to take on the challenge. I look forward to hearing from YOU!

Thank you



WGCF is a non-for-profit educational organization founded in 1928. WGCF is a member of National Garden Clubs, Inc., the largest gardening organization in the world.

Mission: WGCF provides education, resources and opportunities for its members to promote and share the love of gardening, floral design, civic and environmental responsibility.

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ADVERTISING RATES

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Quarter	\$37.50	\$50
Bus. Card	\$20	\$20



PRESIDENTIAL NOTES

Joe Powelka, WGCF President

It's hard to believe that 6 months of my term have already slipped by. But that time has not been wasted. The Executive Committee has been working diligently towards my focus of increasing membership, serving the members better, and mentoring new leadership. Since I last prepared **NOTES** for you, there has been a National Garden Clubs (NGC) convention in Charleston, SC; a Central Region Garden Clubs (CRGC) convention in Elkhart Lake, WI; two WGCF Executive Committee Meetings in Wisconsin Rapids, WI; and numerous District and local Garden Club events. I was warned that the President's office takes a lot of time and effort. Now I understand.

The NGC Convention was well attended and full of events. Our own Gerianne Holzman was installed as NGC First VP. In May 2027, WGCF Gerianne will be elevated to NGC President. She will be only the second NGC President from Wisconsin, following Kitty Larkin, who served as NGC President in 2005-07.

The CRGC Convention was held following the WGCF Flower School Symposium and had attendees from all seven states in our region. The Symposium and Convention were linked by a banquet that featured Arabella Dane, NGC's photography guru, who oversaw a region-wide photo contest. Linda Reuss, a member of The Garden Club of Greater Milwaukee, won the People's Choice Award for her reflections photo, "Sparkling Copper Creek." In addition, NGC President Donna Donnelly was an honored guest at the convention.

Over the last six months, I attended two significant anniversary celebrations. The first was the 75th Anniversary of the Green Thumb Garden Club in Fond du Lac in July. Fifties attire was the "uniform of the day," and there were many June Cleavers in the audience. The second event was the Madison District's 90th Anniversary celebration, which included a flower show with decadal classes. In addition to attending the anniversary events, my wife Diane and I took in the Oshkosh Burdocks and Rust Garden Stroll at the Bob & Julie Kissinger home near Van Dyne, WI. The home was featured in *Wisconsin* magazine, and after visiting, I can see why. It was fantastic!

Joe

WGCF IS LOOKING TO THE FUTURE.....

Sue Wallace, Karen Merlau, Kathy Shaw, Roger Greathead, Futures Committee

RECRUIT, RETAIN, AND REVITALIZE. These are the goals of the Futures Committee, which Joe Powelka initiated. Wisconsin Garden Club Federation and our clubs are strong. However, we're facing issues similar to those of many other organizations. We're getting "more mature," and we're really busy.

To improve support for our clubs, the Futures Committee developed our **First 2025 Survey**. Attendees at the 2025 convention in Eau Claire completed this survey. We identified the following three top categories for improvement/revitalization.

- 1) **Recruiting new members and officers**
- 2) **Fundraising**
- 3) **Conventions**

The summary of the survey is at: www.wisconsingardenclub.org/futures.html

RECRUITING: (*Check the WGCF website (above) for these and more ideas.*)

- A steady stream of new members is vital because they bring fresh perspectives and new ideas, help with the workload, enhance the team, and help build a better network.
- A fillable *New Member* club brochure is in development and will be available soon. Clubs will be able to personalize the material themselves and use it as a recruiting tool.
- *Seed Sharing Event* instructions are available on the WGCF website (listed above). Seed packets can be created as a public introduction to clubs. Seeds could be free or a fundraiser. This event could be an excellent way to reach out to the community.

FUNDRAISING FOR CONVENTIONS: *Sponsorship information* and correspondence examples were shared with District Directors and Convention Chairs. This process helped raise \$5,000 for the 2025 WGCF convention.

- Fundraising and donations are important because they affect the registration costs attendees pay for the convention.
- Your registration costs can be reduced if effort is devoted to fundraising by securing contributions from outside sponsors.

RETAINING: *Survey #2* is currently being developed as part of Strategic Planning to understand our members' interests and capabilities better. More to come soon.

- WGCF wants to know our members for various reasons. The skills and interests that you have are important and worthwhile.
- Currently, the member information that WGCF has on file is fundamental. It is pretty much just contact info. We know there is a wealth of knowledge and skills that can be leveraged if we better understand our members' backgrounds and interests.
- This knowledge could help identify potential new speakers and programs and create a library of resources that can be drawn upon in many situations.

CONVENTIONS: A *timeline of activities* with examples was developed, enumerating the activities and timing needed to create a convention. This information was also shared with interested parties.

We have a long way to go in developing our ideas, and we're always interested in hearing more from you. Be sure to check our WGCF website for more Futures information. CTRL + CLICK on the web address above to go directly to the website.

2025 - 2027 WGCF PRESIDENT'S PROJECT

Diane Powelka, Elizabeth Giese, President's Project



As of November 15, President Joe Powelka's President Project has received \$2,575.00 in donations from 15 individuals, clubs, and districts. These funds are an excellent start to an inspirational project for both the youth who attend the camp and others who visit this trail.

Please mail contributions to Joe's project to Diane Powelka, 5361 Betlach Road, Sun Prairie, WI 53590-9781. Please make your check payable to the Wisconsin Garden Club Federation and include "President's Project" on the memo line. All contributions are tax-deductible in accordance with the 501(c)(3) IRC status of WGCF.

In May 2027, the club and the district with the highest per capita contributions will each be awarded \$250. For clubs or districts looking to send someone to camp, contact CWES at 715-346-2937 or go to <https://www.uwsp.edu/cwes/home/>. CWES has seven different camping programs for youth aged 7-18.

SMOKEY BEAR/WOODSY OWL POSTER CONTEST

Diane Powelka, Chairman

Garden Club Presidents, please take the time to find out if you have any youngsters who would like to enter the Smokey Bear/Woodsy Owl Poster contest. Please send your posters to your District Director by December 1 so they may send them to me by December 15. If you have a problem with that date, let your District Director know and ask for an extension with an explanation. Only one poster is chosen for each grade.

I send the posters to the Central Region Awards Chair, who then sends them to NGC. I have a small token for everyone who enters. Those will be given to the District Directors at the February Executive Committee meeting. For the best poster(s), a larger prize will be awarded by WGCF.

SEVEN WISCONSIN STUDENTS TO RECEIVE \$18,750 IN SCHOLARSHIPS

Mary Ellen Sedlachek, Scholarship Selection Chair

Henry Koerner from Walworth, WI, has accepted the **Kitty Larkin Scholarship** of \$4,000 to begin his junior year at the University of Minnesota studying Agricultural Education to teach high school students.

At the state level, three **Della Balousek Scholarships** of \$2,500 each were awarded to Treyton Peters, Jr., Bangor, and Brandon Schott, Sauk City, both at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point studying Forest Management. Treyton will also include Business Management and Fire Science in his studies. Luis Avila Vette from Watertown will include Agronomy and Environmental Horticulture in his studies at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville.

Deagan Wiebel, Madison, was awarded the Irene Straus Scholarship of \$1,000 for his studies in Ecosystem Restoration & Management and Forest Health & Ecology at the University of WI, Stevens Point.

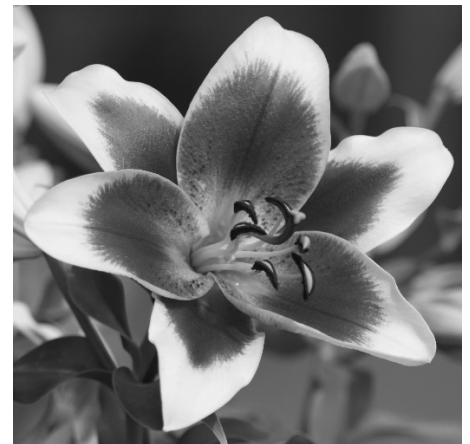
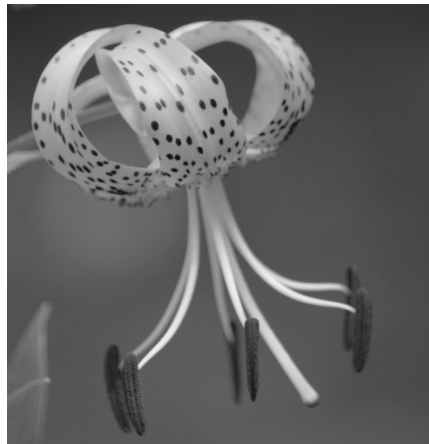
Already a freshman at the University of WI, Stevens Point, Carolyn Riesterer from Kiel received the Myrtle B. Ogilvie Scholarship of \$1,250 to study Natural Resources, Wildlife & Ecosystem Management after graduating this June from high school.

Although 31 students applied for state scholarships, only seven were accepted due to qualifications. The **WGCF Scholarships** of \$1,000 each were awarded to several of the above, including Treyton Peters, Jr., Brandon Schott, Luis Avila Vette, and Deagan Wiebel. Alice Maas, Marion, studying Ecosystem Restoration & Management, and Nature American Studies (Invasive Species) at the University of WI, Stevens Point, also received a WGCF Scholarship.

Please Inform Others About Our Scholarships

Garden club members, please spread the word about our national and state scholarships to friends, relatives, and anyone who knows of a Wisconsin student attending a college or university.

These scholarships are available to students graduating from high school or those becoming juniors, seniors, or graduate students in the next academic year. Scholarships are for students enrolled in various fields of science, including gardening, landscape design, environmental issues, floral design, and horticulture. Information and application forms are available at www.gardenclub.org. The Community Foundation of the Fox Valley accepts all applications due February 1, 2026.



WGCF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Joe Powelka, WGCF President

The WGCF Executive Committee (XC) has met twice since the previous newsletter. The XC is made up of your elected officers: President, First and Second Vice Presidents, Treasurer, Membership and Recording Secretaries, Parliamentarian, and the five District Directors. While those listed are expected to attend all XC meetings, all members of the Board of Directors (BoD) and all WGCF members are welcome to attend. People who are not members of the Executive Committee can participate in the discussions, but they cannot vote.

The XC met on June 19 and October 9 in Wisconsin Rapids. At those meetings, we covered some immediate operational and business issues. We spent most of our time reviewing the strategic planning process that took place a decade ago, along with our current planning efforts. Gerianne Holzman, as the WGCF 1st VP at the time, led a discussion and planning effort to address issues very similar to those we have raised today. Many of the previously identified issues were addressed through WGCF actions, but many also slipped away due to the loss of leadership support and COVID. As a result, there are decade-old issues still awaiting resolution. Today's XC is looking to address these old issues and identify today's concerns. We are developing recommended actions and rolling them into a continuous, single-focused effort to improve service to WGCF membership and our long-term outlook.

Action items were identified to address outstanding decade-old initiatives alongside current issues. The action items are broken down into five categories: a) survey-related issues, b) modifications to recommended programming changes for garden clubs and WGCF activities, c) public outreach efforts, d) modifications to the current membership form, and e) WGCF structural issues. When these actions are combined with the recommendations from Strategic Planning (see separate article) and discussed at the next XC meeting, new action items will be defined to develop recommended actions to change our WGCF directions.

The purpose of all these actions will be the development of recommendations to be presented to you, the membership, prior to the WGCF 2026 convention, then acted upon at the convention. The approved recommendations will define the changes to WGCF's organizational structure and focus. By a consensus of the members, we will determine a way to turn the decline around and make WGCF more appealing to the public at large.

During the last half of the 2025-2027 term, after a set of recommendations is approved, the XC will focus on defining how to implement the recommendations and on a timeline for that implementation. Following an approval of an implementation process, it will take several terms of office with a continuous concerted effort to implement the changes. Your assistance in this process will be essential to the success of our WGCF efforts.

Feel free to attend our next XC meeting at the Hotel Mead and Resort at 9 am on February 19, 2026, and share your input. Or, send me your comments via email (my email address is on the front page) on what you think WGCF should be doing for you as a member. Joe



MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS

Joe Powelka, WGCF President

As reported in the last issue of *WG*, I am concerned about our membership numbers. I stated then, and reconfirm here, that we cannot continue to pretend the loss in membership is not an issue if we are to survive as an organization. As was also stated then, we have dropped from a high of over 3,500 members in the 1960s-70s to just under 1,000 today, and a little more than we had at the very beginning of the organization in the early 1930s. Membership Secretary Diana Peterson provided the following statistics.

MEMBERSHIP 2025								
CLUB	2024 MBRS	2024 New	2024 Lost	2025 Total	2025 New	2025 New Total	Per capita Last Yr	Per capita This Yr
GREEN THUMB	73	6	10	69		69	-5.5%	0.0%
OSHKOSH	59	2	15	46	1	47	-22.0%	2.1%
PAPER VALLEY	24	3	4	23		23	-4.2%	0.0%
WAUSHARA GARDENERS	21	1	2	20	7	27	-4.8%	25.9%
WISCONSIN RIVER	9	1	1	9		9	0.0%	0.0%
FOX VALLEY DISTRICT	186	13	32	167	8	175	-10.2%	4.8%
MOUND VUE	46	6	6	46	7	53	0.0%	13.2%
OLBRICH	12	0	2	10		10	-16.7%	0.0%
SUGAR RIVER GARDENERS	28	0	2	26	1	27	-7.1%	3.7%
SUN PRAIRIE	11	0	0	11	1	12	0.0%	8.3%
SUNSET	21	3	3	21	3	24	0.0%	12.5%
WEST SIDE	56	2	12	46	5	51	-17.9%	9.8%
WI FLORAL DESIGNERS GUILD	13	3	3	13	2	15	0.0%	13.3%
MADISON DISTRICT	187	14	28	173	19	192	-7.5%	11.0%
ELM GROVE	8	0	0	8		8	0.0%	0.0%
ELMBROOK	7	0	2	5		5	-28.6%	0.0%
FLORAL DESIGNERS OF WI	10	0	0	10		10	0.0%	0.0%
FOUR SEASONS	27	8	5	30		30	11.1%	0.0%
FOX POINT FEDERATED	45	22	11	56		56	24.4%	0.0%
GARDEN CLUB OF GREATER MILWAUKEE	174	32	15	191		191	9.8%	0.0%
HAWTHORN	7	1	1	7		7	0.0%	0.0%
IKEBANA INTERNATIONAL #22	19	7	0	26	4	30	36.8%	13.3%
MAYFAIR PARK	6	0	6	0		0	-100.0%	0.0%
POTPOURRI	25	2	3	24		24	-4.0%	0.0%
RACINE	62	6	15	53		53	-14.5%	0.0%
SOUTH SHORE	26	0	26	0		0	-100.0%	0.0%
TOWN & COUNTRY	20	2	3	19		19	-5.0%	0.0%
WESTERN ACRES	7	0	0	7		7	0.0%	0.0%
WHITEFISH BAY	53	10	2	61		61	15.1%	0.0%
MILWAUKEE DISTRICT	496	90	89	497	4	501	0.2%	0.8%
IVY LEAGUE	12	0	0	12		12	0.0%	0.0%
LAKE SHORE	37	3	3	37	3	40	0.0%	7.5%
SHEBOYGAN DISTRICT	49	3	3	49	3	52	0.0%	6.1%
BOTANY BELLES & BEAUS	26	3	3	26		26	0.0%	0.0%
LAKE WISSOTA	40	7	3	44		44	10.0%	0.0%
WILLOW RIVER	27	2	7	22		22	-18.5%	0.0%
ST CROIX DISTRICT	93	12	13	92	0	92	-1.1%	0.0%
AT LARGE MEMBERS	4		3	1	0	1	-75.0%	0.0%
WGCF TOTALS	1,015	132	168	979	34	1,013	-3.5%	3.5%

From this data, we can see that 2024 was a tough year on membership. While we gained 132 new members and a new club, we lost 168 members and two clubs, resulting in a net loss of 36 members. To date this year, we have gained 34 members, but we do not yet know how many we may have lost. Looking at the per capita percentages, 14 of 31 clubs (45%) lost members. Equally, six clubs (20%) gained members, and 11 clubs (35%) remained the same. We will inevitably lose members, but we all need to focus on retaining members and increasing our numbers. To do so will improve our membership experience and expand our reach. Improving membership numbers was what the founders of WGCF sought, and it is what we need to strive to maintain. **TOGETHER WE CAN DO THIS!**

HOUSE WRENS

Kathy Shaw, Birds/Ornithology

I was recently asked what we do to control cabbage moth caterpillars on broccoli. My answer surprised my friend: birds, particularly bluebirds, phoebes, and house wrens. I particularly like the Northern House Wrens as they are so fearless and cheerful. Many have been the times that I've rocked back on my heels while weeding in the garden to watch them forage and sing within a few feet of me. It amazes me that they can keep making noise when they have so many insect legs sticking out of their mouths; it looks like they have whiskers.

A familiar backyard bird, the Northern House Wren was named long ago for its tendency to nest around human homes or in birdhouses. Very active and inquisitive, bouncing about with its short tail tilted up, pausing to sing a rich bubbling song, it adds a lively spark to gardens and city parks despite its lack of bright colors.

As its common name suggests, the small, active house wren is often found near people's homes. This bird's genus name, *Troglodytes*, means "hole dweller," and refers to its mouse-like tendency to pop in and out of crevices while foraging and seeking shelter or nesting spots.

As with many birds, your ears can help lead you to Northern House Wren sightings. Start in the right habitat: backyards, gardens, parks, or open woods, then listen. The loud, bubbly song of the House Wren seems larger than the singer itself! The Chippewa call it *O-du-na'-mis-sug-ud-da-we'-shi*, meaning "big noise for its size." Males constantly vocalize while on territory; females also sing, but not as consistently. The song can be hard to learn at first, because the notes are nondescript and variable, and because there's simply so much of it—so loud and insistent—that it's hard to believe such a small bird is making it.

A plain brown bird about five inches in length, wrens are commonly seen zipping through shrubs and low tree branches, snatching insects. They breed in a wide variety of semi-open habitats, including suburbs, orchards, woodlots, open forest, streamside groves, and many others. Wrens winter in the southern states and Mexico, primarily in areas of dense low growth, including thickets and streamside brush.

Wrens love brush piles for cover, protection, and a source of insects. If you need to prune trees or cut brush in your yard, consider heaping the cuttings into a pile as a safe place for birds to gather.

The house wren is famous for nesting just about anywhere: in natural and artificial cavities, nest boxes of all types, planters and pots, drainpipes, shoes, and laundry left out to dry. John James Audubon, famous for his paintings of birds in their natural settings, painted a family of Northern House Wrens nesting in an old hat!

The male builds incomplete "dummy" nests in several cavities; the female chooses one and finishes the nest by adding lining. The finished nest has a foundation of twigs, topped with a softer cup of plant fibers, grass, weeds, animal hair, and feathers.

Consider installing a nest box to attract a breeding pair well before the breeding season. Place the nest box within 100 feet of woody vegetation, making sure there is enough space around the box so the wrens can fly freely to and from the entrance hole. Keep nest boxes separated by over 100 feet. Attach a guard to keep predators from raiding eggs and young. Northern House Wrens also nest inside tree holes. Wrens are very territorial and will harass other birds, peck at other nests' eggs, or even push out other baby birds.

Northern House Wrens typically lay 6–8 eggs per nesting. The temperature inside the nest box can be critical to survival. If a sun-drenched nest box warms above about 106 degrees Fahrenheit for an hour, the eggs will begin to die. If a cold snap chills a nest below about 65 degrees Fahrenheit for more than a day, it can also doom the eggs.

I've noticed that wrens seem to arrive in our yard weeks after the bluebirds and phoebes. The male house wrens arrive on the breeding grounds first, establishing their territories by singing their hearts out and building several "dummy" stick nests to attract a female. When a female decides to accept a male (females do the

choosing), her mate takes her on a tour of his pseudo-nests. When she accepts a nest, she finishes it by adding a soft lining of feathers, hair, moss, and rootlets.

The female lays a clutch of 4 to 8 whitish-pink, brown-speckled eggs, which she incubates for about two weeks. Interestingly, Northern House Wren eggs have unusually thick shells that are almost twice as strong as similar-sized eggs. This unusual shell strength is likely an adaptation to this species' egg-destroying tendencies, which extend to their own kind.

Both parents feed nestlings, and the fledglings leave the nest about 12-18 days later. The wrens forage actively in dense vegetation at various levels searching for insects among foliage, in the bark of tree trunks, and on the ground. They will typically have two broods per year. In mid-August, we still have hatchlings being fed in a gourd nest above our patio. Our broccoli has been protected through another season!

WGCF LIFE MEMBERSHIPS

Lucy Valitchka, Life Membership

I am the WGCF Life Membership Chairman for the 2025-27 term. This appointment includes all the following life memberships: Wisconsin Garden Club Federation, Central Region Garden Clubs, and National Garden Clubs. For this issue, I am focusing on WGCF Life Membership. (I can help those interested in Central Region or NGC Life Memberships get information, if needed.)

Here is a brief summary of Life Membership from the WGCF Standing Rules:

- Wisconsin Life Membership is an honorary designation which demonstrates pride in the organization and support of the Scholarship or Continuing Education Fund. The membership fee may be purchased by an individual or presented as a gift. Wisconsin Life Members are club members who must pay club, district, and WGCF dues. Individuals already having a life membership may be honored with a tribute. Please indicate on the form if a tribute is being presented to the recipient.
- The fee is \$50.00 and is sent to the WGCF Life Membership Chairman. If sent to our state treasurer first, it would save a step because a scanned copy of the application could be sent to me. However, it is done; I must receive the application form. This form can be found on our WGCF website under "forms."

We have received only five WGCF Life Member numbers for 2025. These members are from the following districts: Fox River Valley, Madison, and Milwaukee. I hope to see other districts adding to this total before our April 2026 convention in Appleton. Consider honoring some dedicated members in your club. It is a worthy cause and a way to thank members for all they have done in a club, a district, or as a WGCF board member.

Please get in touch with me at lmvalitchka@gmail.com if you have any questions. Thank you!

"ONLY IN THE SPRING"
WISCONSIN GARDEN CLUB FEDERATION 98TH ANNUAL CONVENTION
Hosted by the Fox River Valley District

April 26-28, 2026

Bridgewood Resort Hotel and Conference Center
1000 Cameron Way, Neenah, WI

Mark your calendars now for the WGCF 26 Convention. Details and registration forms will be in the *Wisconsin Gardens* Spring edition. Speakers will include: Anita Carpenter: Quilts, Ken Friedman: Video & Comments, Brian Pribbenow: Floral Designs, Richard Nicolay: Blue Birds & Purple Martins, William Volkert: Bird Migrations. Workshops on Journals, Photography, and Wild Ones are scheduled. Honored guests include Gerianne Holzman, NGC 1st Vice President, and Rene Lynch, CRGC Director. **We will host** a photo competition, specifics coming soon. Classes include: Celebrate America; Water In Its Many Forms; Monochromatic Trees; Insects and Flowers; Still Home to Me; and Nature Digitized.

OPERATION WILDFLOWER: LEAVES ARE NOT LITTER

Diane Powelka, Operation Wildflower (*Partially reprinted with permission from Madison Chapter Wild Ones and Xerces Society*)



I am often surprised where my desktop explorations take me, usually with something I see that I don't quite understand. So I dig a little deeper. Last October, the National Wildlife Federation wrote an article listing seven species of animals that need the leaves that drop at the end of the season. They listed salamanders, box turtles, eastern red bat, ovenbird, morning cloak, bees, but perhaps a luna moth should be a poster child for why we should leave the leaves. A female luna lays her eggs on the leaves of white birch, walnut, hickory, or sumac. Farther south, they may choose sweetgum trees. When the caterpillars hatch, they feed on these leaves, eventually spinning a protective silk cocoon that incorporates some leaves. When autumn leaves fall off, the cocoon stays securely wrapped, waiting on the ground, camouflaged and protected. It is similar for 94% of other moth species, which also drop off various shrubs and trees to develop as larvae, landing among leaves, soil, and bark to pupate in cocoons.

How do native plants relate to Lunas? Luna caterpillars have incredibly variable diets overall, but very specific local preferences. In a 1989 study, Richard Lindroth attempted to raise Lunas on 11 different recorded host plants, only experiencing success with four of these. Why didn't all of the caterpillars thrive? Lindroth hypothesized that local populations of lunas are specifically adapted to particular host plant species, possibly based on the enzymes their bodies produce to help them digest their food. Since his lunas all came from one regional population, they might not have been equipped with the adaptations necessary to eat plants that lunas in other areas thrive on. Hickory, butternut, and walnut trees all produce a defensive chemical called juglone. Caterpillars reared on juglone-producing plants in Lindroth's study developed highly increased levels of an enzyme that helped them tolerate juglone in their diets. Being able to utilize these species as a food source is a huge advantage, with little competition from other insects. Luna caterpillars reared on birch, which doesn't produce juglone, had low levels of the enzyme and couldn't survive the diet of walnut family leaves.

As defense mechanisms, larvae make clicking noises with their mandibles, which are audible to humans and predators. The clicks are a warning before regurgitating intestinal contents. Winged adults have long hindwing tails that pose a "false target," reducing the risk of predation by bats.

When might you see them? We have only encountered luna moths a few times, these during the day; two of the times attached to low vegetation. Bug lady Kate Redmond suggested watching for them in June. But our only photos in southern Wisconsin are from August 9, 2003. Brett Peto (of the Lake County Forest Preserve website) says that in northern Illinois, two generations of adult moths can be seen in the summer: one from late May to early June, and then again from late July to early August. Where they occur, spring broods are a deeper green color with reddish-purple wing margins; later broods are paler with grayish margins. Adults live about 7 to 10 days, just long enough to mate and lay eggs. Not even long enough to need a meal, in fact. As adults, luna moths live off stored energy, with only vestigial mouthparts and no real digestive system.

The right conditions for hatchings are warm temperatures and high humidity. So, look for them on a night after a good rain. Keep in mind that other local light sources may draw them away from your light. Keep checking until 2:00 or 3:00 am, and you might see them arrive. By morning, most will have already come and gone in their haste to find mates or a suitable place to hide for the day.



Madison School Forest
Olsen Woods,
August 9, 2003

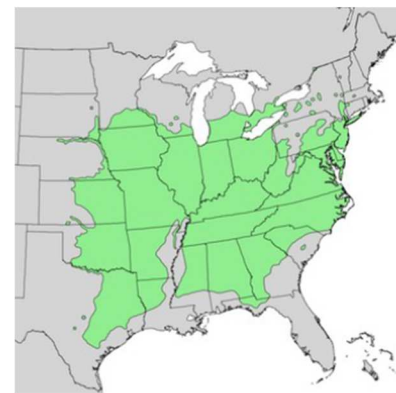
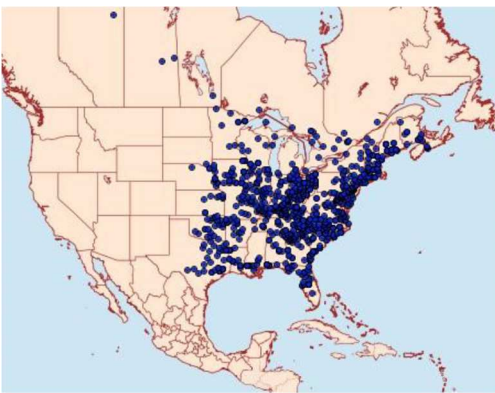
Lunas are members of the giant silk worm group, with about 2,300 species worldwide. They tend to be very large as caterpillars, as well as some of the largest moths. They often have eye spots on their wings, and their wings may exceed four inches.

Silk is a natural protein fiber that can be woven into textiles. Most of this is obtained from the cocoons of the mulberry silk-worm, *Bombyx mori*, reared in captivity. Bees, wasps, several other insects, and spiders can also produce silk.

Lenore of Kansas City Gardner's says all caterpillars have spinnerets, modified salivary glands on their lower jaw. They spit out the liquid silk, which hardens on contact with air to form strands of fibroin protein.

Butterfly caterpillars do not make cocoons like moth caterpillars, but they may use silk for attachment pads, safety lines, tent shelters, or leaf rolls.

The range of lunas extends across the eastern half of the US and into adjacent southern Canada. Wagner suggests food preferences include birch, black gum, hickory, pecan, persimmon, sweet gum, and walnut, depending upon local availability. If you look at the range maps of larval host preferences, it becomes clear that only birch will be available for northernmost caterpillars, while persimmon and sweet gum can feed Florida and coastal populations.



2024 range map for luna moth, *Actias luna* Paper birch, *Betula papyrifera* Eastern black walnut, *Juglans nigra*



Butternut or White walnut *Juglans cinerea*



Shagbark hickory, *Carya ovata*



Bitternut or Yellowbud hickory, *Carya cordiformis*

In Wisconsin, we have two members of the walnut family, black walnut, *Juglans nigra*, and butternut, *J. cinerea*. Both produce edible nuts. Black walnut wood is also prized for its dark colored, close-grained texture. We also have two hickory nuts; shagbark produces edible nuts, while bitternut is not considered edible. All have compound leaves and catkins. Because we seldom see these flowers of trees high in the canopy, it is easy to forget they might be beautiful and interesting.

Butternut used to be found over most of Wisconsin except for the northernmost counties. Now they are of special concern in the state due to a butternut canker, which is often fatal. While a few plants seem to show some resistance, this mitosporic fungus could expand its effective parasitism to hickories.



A butternut tree growing on the west rim trail of Devil's Lake.



Black walnuts on the lane to TPE's Vale Prairie. The tough, green, bumpy Husk that turns brownish-black remains until squirrels or vehicles scrape them off. It is still a chore to retrieve any nutmeats.



Thick husks on shagbark hickory nuts split loose as they dry. (Husks of bitternut hickory are much thinner). Except for most years, it's hard to beat the squirrels to unblemished nuts.

WAUSHARA GARDENERS SEED SHARING EVENT

Kathy Shaw, Waushara Garden Club President

I have been asked to outline the steps leading up to our annual free Seed Sharing Give-Away event each March. Our club uses this event as both a membership drive and a public service. The three years we have held this event have led to at least seven new members.



The seed varieties offered are collected by club members and donated by national seed companies. The Waushara Gardeners break down the standard seed packets or member donations into smaller sample packs so more people can try growing varieties they normally might not have easy access to or would not try due to their cost.

Any leftover sample seed packets are donated to the Wautoma Library and Leon-Saxeville Library's seed libraries, along with a monetary donation from Waushara Gardeners to help keep their seed libraries growing. Leftover native seed packets are saved to give away at our booth at our annual Waushara Nature Fair in May, and any packets not taken from the libraries or the fair are gathered up and given away at our annual Plant Sale in May.

What does it take to put on our Seed Sharing event, you ask?

September-December:

Solicit seed companies for seed packets. (I targeted six of the companies we use and received positive responses from three!) Asking earlier works better than later, for some companies.

Encourage club members to save seeds from non-hybrid, heritage, standard, and native seed varieties.

January:

Start advertising if you are holding your event in March, as we do.

Order supplies: we use paper bags, coin envelopes, glue sticks (to seal envelopes), labels (if not printing on envelopes), computer ink, and paper. Glue sticks work better for us than moistening the envelopes. Labels work well too, but can be a waste if fewer than one sheet is needed: 30 1x3 labels/sheet, and you only need five envelopes, for instance.

Create a list of varieties and the number of envelopes each will need, with an average of 10 seeds per envelope. If there are seeds available for more than 30 envelopes, we divide the number of seeds to fill 30 envelopes max. For large seeds or very few seeds, we may decide to put only 5 per envelope, such as peppers.

February:

Create product descriptions with pictures, seed-starting and seed-saving instructions, and tape them to paper bags. (We do three columns on a landscape layout Word document with very small margins.) It takes me approximately 18 hours for 170 varieties. We write the number of seeds to put in each packet on the back of the bags as the envelopes are printed.

Print envelopes with the name, short seed-starting instructions, and a QR code linking to the product description from the seed company. The printed envelopes are stored in the paper bag for that variety. It takes approximately 11 hours to print 2370 envelopes.

It seems like a lot of time, however, I find it's great to be immersed in flower and vegetable information during the winter off-season.

March:

Schedule a special meeting to conduct seed packing a couple of weeks before the event. We bring paper plates to help contain the seeds. Some people brought tiny spoons or utensils to help them separate seeds. We have the seeds and the empty envelopes inside the paper bag with the variety info on it in one area. Once the seeds are divided and sealed in envelopes, they are returned to the paper bags and placed in a box as "finished" for either vegetable, flower, or native. This process takes approximately 26 total hours. We had 12 people for two hours, then we all went to lunch. Committee members take the finished bags home to put them into alphabetical order by genus and variety.

Two hours before the event, we meet to arrange the tables and set up the bags around them.

A greeting table is also set up for non-members to sign in. The log also includes a space to let us know where they heard about the event and a space to include their email addresses if they want to hear about future events with our club. We have had over 35 community members who we invited to our meetings and events from the three annual seed-sharing events we have had.

Another table features displays of the gardens we take care of, as well as literature about our club that they can take home.

People arrive between 6:00 and 6:30 pm for our social time. At 6:30, we welcome everyone, talk a little about our club's offerings, and then let everyone walk around and take envelopes of the varieties they would like. We stress that they should take only one of any given variety and only take the ones they will grow that year. Our members take turns answering questions and selecting varieties they would like. When the bags are empty of sample packets, our members remove them from the tables. We encourage community members to stay for our regular meeting, which follows the event.

In Conclusion:

To date, we have averaged around 12-18 community members and about 15 club members at each event, and we give away about one-third of the packets. The remaining seed packets are divided up between the two seed libraries at our community libraries, and the library patrons are excited to get them. Our county only has a population of about 25,000, so your results could be quite different.