



## OZARK CHAPTER

FALL 2020 ISSUE





## Fall 2020 Newsletter

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## President's Column: Of Partnerships and Projects

*By Eric Fuselier • President of the Wild Ones, Ozark Chapter Board*

Hello, and welcome to the latest issue of the Wild Ones, Ozark Chapter newsletter. We're very excited to share with you some of the new developments that have taken place since our last issue.

For starters, we've been very busy in the community forming partnerships with other conservation organizations such as the Arkansas Monarch Conservation Partnership and the Northwest Arkansas Master Naturalists. We hope our partnerships with these organizations will help us to further the mission of Wild Ones here in the Natural State.

We've also begun providing free consulting services to homeowners, and our experts have met with several already (while following CDC guidelines, of course) to help them select the native plant species best suited for the location of their home gardens. We hope you, too, will take advantage of this service.

We helped organize and participated in a native plant rescue operation in Fayetteville. This rescue ended up leading to the formation of our new Dig Committee. And now, with the formation of this committee, there will be many more of these native plant rescues in the future.

We hosted a fall webinar series that drew a very enthusiastic audience and featured several local experts who spoke on topics ranging from gardening for monarch butterflies and beneficial insects to ecological land management practices and invasive species control. In addition, several of our chapter members have been presenting for other groups and organizations on topics ranging from native plants for engineering and landscaping, to native plant propagation in greenhouses and high tunnels.

And finally, there is the newsletter which you are currently reading, and which we hope will grow to become an indispensable resource to the native plant community of Northwest Arkansas.

While we haven't been able to gather in the same place for regular monthly programming, we're excited to be able to continue providing engaging content for both your education and your enjoyment. Plans for a spring webinar series are being made, and a video series showcasing some excellent examples of native plant landscaping in Northwest Arkansas can be expected to come out of our chapter next year.

If you would like to become a member, you can do so at [wildones.org/membership](https://wildones.org/membership). You can join for as little as \$25 a year if you are a student or on limited income. We do not want cost to be a limiting factor that prohibits new members from being able to join. But if you can pay more, please pay more.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to email us at [WildOnesOzarkChapter@gmail.com](mailto:WildOnesOzarkChapter@gmail.com). We are here to serve and assist you in whatever way we can.

Sincerely,



Eric Fuselier, President  
Wild Ones Ozark Chapter



## KEEPING IN TOUCH

**National Website** – Members of Wild Ones have exclusive access to abundant resources on the national [Wild Ones website](#). Registration gives you access to files, publications, and articles only available to members. On the upper right-hand corner of the main page is a “member login” button that will give you instructions for registering.

You’ll be able to access archived Journal articles, vote on the annual photo contest, sign up for the discussion group, and much more!

**Facebook** – Our [Chapter Facebook page](#) is open to the public.

**Board meetings** – Meetings are temporarily on hold due to Covid-19, but we’re developing online programming – so keep an eye on our Facebook postings.

## BOARD CONTACT INFORMATION

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## The Eureka Springs Native Plant Garden Project

*Chris Fischer • Eureka Springs Native Plant Garden Project*

Across from Basin Spring Park, tucked away adjacent to a parking lot and a public art wall, is a neglected green space on a long-forgotten street littered with power lines, sewer pipes, and an abandoned formal garden. Here, the renewal of an urban natural habitat is underway.

The idea emerged after a 2014 victory against SWEPCO's plan to build a transmission line between Benton and Carroll counties. Susan and Kei Pang of St. Louis proposed that Faith and Mike Shah (who valiantly opposed the line as part of the nonprofit Save the Ozarks) continue the Save the Ozarks mission to protect the environment by creating a place to support songbirds, insects, and pollinators.

The small garden site is enhancing Eureka's long heritage as a destination for healing, as well as promoting eco-tourism and increasing options for outdoor experiences and walking throughout the city's green spaces and springs.



*Sharon Roberts and Michael Shah designing internal rock pathways in February 2019. The steep terrain is particularly challenging.*

Working in cooperation with the City of Eureka Springs Public Works Department, the Mayor's Office, and the Preservation Society, volunteers of The Native Plant Garden Project began in early summer of 2015 to clear the sloped site of weeds, transplant ornamentals, trim trees, and plan fundraisers. Working regularly on weekdays with members of the Northwest Arkansas Master Naturalists, the group planted some 60 species of native trees, shrubs, perennials, grasses, and mosses. They repaired stone walls, built pathways and erected fencing to keep the local white tail deer at bay. Volunteers meet every few weeks to continually remove invasive seedlings and groom the plants

to establish a sustainable, low-maintenance garden, working methodically along the tiered slope.

Also, through the hosting of four native plant fairs, the community has learned directly from the site, observed the progress of the plants and the pollinator visitors, and benefitted from walks, plant sales, workshops, and lectures.

Other events have included annual tree plantings through the Tree City USA program; walks/talks during Arkansas Heritage Month's "Off the Beaten Path;" participation in the National Wildlife Federation's Natural Habitat program; the Pollinator Alliance's "Million Pollinator Garden" and the city's Bee City USA program.

Success is measured by the site's growing environmental value. A patch of noxious weeds has been transformed into an active natural resource, providing a collaborative experience with the city that teaches effective habitat preservation.

A view of  
the garden  
through  
Blue Sage  
*Salvia  
azurea*



Stephen Foster, author of "Peterson Field Guide to Medicinal Plants and Herbs of Eastern and Central North America," speaks about the Plantain species during an event.



David Pettit in spring 2019, capping the deteriorating city wall, which volunteers then patched and painted.



Volunteers  
Sara Russell  
and  
Charlotte  
Harper  
laughing at  
the weeds.



ABOUT CHRIS: Chris Fischer is a founding member of the Native Plant Garden Project, a former landscape contractor and ISA Certified Arborist. He lives on Winona Creek, south of Eureka Springs.





## An Unexpected Photo-Bomber



Wild Ones Ozark Chapter member Steve Alarid captured this Blue-Winged wasp (*Scolia dubia*) on Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) in a rain garden on his property – can you find the surprise?

## Using Groundcovers for Weed Suppression

By Sarah Geurtz • Northwest Arkansas Native Plant Society's Education Committee

We work hard at preventing weeds. We pull. We put down thick layers of mulch and install weed barriers. Yet the weeds sprout anyway!

If you would like to eliminate the expense and time of laying mulch and/or putting down weed barrier (and still having to weed), instead try planting groundcovers amongst your plants for weed suppression. Then, around those groundcover plants, spread just a scattering (maybe an inch) of mulch. I have found that 1 inch of mulch (or even less) for the first year or two does a decent job of weed suppression. With less mulch, the roots of the groundcover plants can breathe and won't become too moist.

Groundcovers are a useful alternative to mulch when you're converting a Bermuda lawn to garden space. Even a 3-inch layer of shredded hardwood mulch won't keep the Bermuda seeds from sprouting after killing the Bermuda – so why haul in all that mulch when groundcovers can provide the same benefit? Groundcover plants will diminish the sunlight reaching the soil surface, and any Bermuda sprouts that pop up (and they will, because Bermuda is the devil) will be less apt to get out of hand. You can then keep a watchful eye out for weak, sun-starved Bermuda sprouts and pull them.

If you will be planting in a forest environment with shade, keep in mind that, with a healthy forest floor, when spring ephemerals go dormant and die back a second stage of groundcovers emerges (such as grasses, sedges, violets, and Virginia creeper). You can replicate this succession in your garden.

With a sunny, prairie-like or glade planting, natives such as sedges, grasses, violets, yarrow, and wild strawberry can be utilized to choke out weeds. Taller flowers and grasses provide shade, giving groundcovers some protection from full sun in the heat of summer.

If natives are given rich soil and too little root competition, they are prone to being short lived and often will grow much taller than you may want. The addition of a groundcover layer beneath taller plants mimics conditions in the wild and helps to limit height (due to the increased demand for water and nutrients by the crowded plants) and increases biodiversity. The taller plants will also provide some shade for the low-growing groundcovers. Think of how plants grow in the wild – not surrounded by a 3-foot diameter of shredded hardwood mulch. You can pack those flowers/grasses/sedges in and they'll be quite happy.

There are many groundcover plant options that are native to Northwest Arkansas, but below I will describe some of the ones I am very familiar with. Some are short enough to grow beneath other plants, while others will provide a taller "groundcover."

***Achillea millifolium* (Yarrow)** – The fine, ferny foliage is evergreen and clumping, spreading outwards by rhizomes. The stalk with white flowers may reach up to 3 feet in height. Yarrow is tough but, in my experience, short-lived.

***Callirhoe involucrate* (Purple Poppy Mallow)** – This plant is striking in the spring with a tidy pile of basal foliage that usually holds through the winter. Its long arms spread out with large magenta flowers. It blooms its heart out until hot weather hits, then its arms die back and it looks a bit rough until the cooler weather of fall, when the basal foliage greens again and you may get more flowers. One foot tall; 3 feet wide or more.

***Fragaria virginiana* (Wild Strawberry!)** – Our cultivated strawberry is actually a cross with this strawberry. This delightful creeping perennial is tough as nails. In spring, it produces cheerful little white flowers that develop into small strawberries held off the ground (versus the cultivated strawberry's



large fruits which sit on the ground where mold and critters eat them before you can). The flavor of our native strawberry is surprisingly wonderful! Years ago, I did a blind taste test with my then-toddler – a native strawberry against a crossed strawberry (both from my garden and ripe). She enthusiastically chose the native strawberry, so I promptly pulled out my diseased hybrid strawberries and never looked back. Wild strawberry fruits are typically around the size of your fingernail, but I’ve had some older plants produce larger ones the size of small commercial berries.

This plant spreads aggressively in good soil but not as much where soil is poor. The first couple years growing in my rich garden soil resulted in this plant growing at least one foot tall and trying to take over my garden. However, now in its third or fourth year, it’s better behaved. The patch I planted beneath a Maple tree between the sidewalk and curb (where the soil is extremely dry) is a creeping mat, 4-6 inches tall, that doesn’t spread aggressively. The winter foliage is a beautiful evergreen red and purple year-round.

***Glandularia canadensis* (Rose Verbena)** – This low-growing native prefers poor soils on disturbed sites. It is tough and has wonderfully fragrant purple flowers. It spreads around 2-3 feet. It will reseed some, but I’ve never had it reseed enough to be a nuisance or to fully replace itself. This is a short-lived perennial; it might live 2 or 3 years. This plant holds its basal foliage late into the autumn/early winter and will turn beautiful mahogany and purple.

***Phemeranthus calycinus* (Rock Pink)** – The magenta flowers of the Rock Pink dance in the wind like gems atop airy stalks about 8 inches tall. The succulent-like foliage dies back in winter. I have had good luck with mine spreading through reseeding. This plant likes it dry, and mulch can cause rot and prevent reseeding.

***Packera obovata*, also known as *Senecia obovata* (Squaw Weed or Spoon-Leafed Ragwort)** – I have loved this plant since I was young child and my grandmother taught me that one of its common names is “Squaw weed.” If you see its blanket of yellow flowers or basal foliage on the forest floor, you’ll understand its use as a groundcover. It’s both beautiful and tough, growing in either sun or filtered shade. One foot wide and 6 inches tall (or over a foot tall with flower stalks).

***Sedum pulchellum* (Widow’s Cross)** – Great for a dry sunny site, such as by a curb or sidewalk. It has cheerful lime-green succulent foliage topped with pink flowers. This little sedum loves dry soil but be warned – it dies after flowering in late spring/early summer. As long as you don’t suppress its seeds from germinating by using a layer of mulch, you should get more next year.

***Penstemon arkansanus*, *Penstemon cobaea*, *Penstemon digitalis*, *Penstemon tubiflorus* (various species of Beardtongue)** – Terrific choice for its evergreen basal foliage. Typically blooms in spring with a white or pink flower stalk which later dies back, leaving a seed head which you can knock to the ground; a clump of attractive basal foliage remains. Often a short-lived perennial.

## shady situations

***Asarum canadense* (Wild Ginger)** – This native groundcover likes shade. Rounded fall foliage emerges in spring. After the heat and dryness of our summers, it will likely look quite haggard. But it will be fine! It grows around 6 inches tall and spreads by rhizomes.

***Onoclea sensibilis* (Sensitive Fern)** – In my experience, this plant takes a lot of space, so be sure you want a large patch where you plant it! It’s an attractive, lush, tropical-looking fern that in some ways does not appear as a fern due to its striking, wide yet thin, leaves. 3 feet tall and wide. Not evergreen. Spreads by rhizomes and spores in wet soils yet can tolerate drier soils.

***Parthenocissus quinquefolia* (Virginia Creeper)** – Here’s a tough native vine. It creeps along and climbs by suckers on vertical surfaces. It has gorgeous red fall color. It grows along the forest floor as a groundcover until it reaches a tree, at which point it grows upwards and horizontally. Excellent red fall color.

***Podophyllum peltatum* (Mayapple)** – Think of this as a spring groundcover (it is a spring ephemeral) that allows double layering! You can have a patch of Mayapple that emerges in the spring, and then as it is dying back, secondary plants can fill the soon-to-be-empty space within the same patch.

***Polystichum acrostichoides* (Christmas Fern)** – A beautiful fern with dark green, evergreen foliage! This fern is clumping, so planting a mass of them creates a beautiful groundcover. Around 2 feet tall and wide. Shade to part shade.

***Potentilla simplex* (Common Cinquefoil)** – This is a favorite of mine. This little perennial, deciduous vine is tough as nails. It has yellow flowers in the spring, trails as a groundcover, and can also tumble over plants a bit. You won’t find this in the nursery trade probably, but if you happen to have this common native plant in your garden or find it in nature – I encourage you to leave it to spread and collect seed for your garden!

***Viola sororia* (Wild Violet)** – May people think of this sweet diminutive wildflower as a weed, but it’s a fantastic native groundcover! Allow it to provide soil cover and serve as an important source of spring nectar and pollen. Let it spread around at will! Spring pollinators will thank you for the early flowers. Arkansas’ state butterfly, the beautiful Dianna Fritillary (*Speyeria diana*), uses Viola as its host plant and lays its eggs in the surrounding soil.

## grasses and sedges

***Andropogon ternarius* (Split Beard Bluestem)** – Perennial bunching warm-seasoned grass. You’ll have short foliage for much of the growing season, but in late summer and fall the stalks will shoot up and you’ll be treated to beautiful silvery-tufted seed heads. 2-4 feet tall; around 2 feet wide.

***Bouteloua curtipendula* (Sideoats Gramma)** – This clumping perennial grass has been very well-behaved for me. Without competition, it reaches around 1.5 feet in height. Grown crowded with other taller plants, it might reach around 2.5 feet in height.

***Carex eburnean* (Ivory Sedge)** – this 6- to 10-inch tall sedge can grow in part sun to full shade and dry soil. Fine textured.

***Chasmanthium latifolium* (River Oats)** – This tough grass spreads aggressively and typically grows along waterways in both woods and open areas. It grows around 3 feet tall. Seeds hang attractively from the top of the stems and hold for much of the winter, lending nice winter interest. While it grows in wet areas, it tolerates our Arkansas droughts excellently.

***Juncus tenuis* (Path Rush)** – Takes dense, compacted soils and spreads freely. Sun to part shade and average to wet soils. Around 6-12 inches. Fine-textured. Beautiful, fine, soft foliage.

***Schizachyrium scoparium* (Little Bluestem)** – An upright, clump-forming, blue-tinged grass. During the fall and winter, it has fuzzy silvery seeds that lend a beautiful appearance. Grows 2-4 feet in height and tends to look a bit messy when grown as single specimen, so plant in a clump or with other plants around it. Sun.

***Sporobolus heterolepis* (Prairie Dropseed)** – This clumping, finely foliated, warm-season grass has a very neat and symmetrically-mounding form. The seed heads are held above the foliage. It is said to prefer dry soil, but mine has thrived in wet clay. It has not reseeded in this growing condition.



*ABOUT SARAH: Sarah Geurtz of Earthplan Design Alternatives, PA, is a landscape architect holding degrees in both Turf and Landscape Horticulture and Landscape Architecture. She is passionate about the native plants of Arkansas and the positive ecologic impact and public educational potential created by using them in her landscape designs. She is also a member of the Arkansas Native Plant Society's Education Committee.*





## Simplicity

Nature appears to be  
nothingness by design  
unobtrusive, unnoticeable,  
surrounding, submerging,  
encompassing, incorporating.

Nature swallows us whole  
digests us, reduces us,  
as in myriad ways, and renders  
all she encounters to  
the simplest of elements.

Nature recycles, reinvents,  
reintroduces, and reiterates  
constantly the simplest of themes.

Survival over time  
requires the ultimate simplicity.

- Carter Carrigan



**ABOUT CARTER:** *Carter Carrigan is a nature lover, a science enthusiast, and a close observer of the great outdoors in any form. He is a former member of the U.S. Special Forces Medical Program, a member of Wild Ones, Ozark Chapter, and he used to own a professional pet sitting business.*

## Mystery Plant

By Trudy Carrigan • Member, Wild Ones, Ozark Chapter

When you buy a mixed package of native seeds, the anticipation of plants can be both agony and ecstasy. If you are not a tidy gardener, the emerging plants can be a constant mystery. Sometimes you proudly recognize a plant, but just as often you wonder, “Is that a native plant or a noxious weed?” In our yard, we aren’t particularly dedicated to weeding, so practically everything gets a fair chance of survival.

This year, the biggest mystery was a little patch of about ten plants of varying heights that began to grow in late spring. The tallest three were about 4-feet tall. For months, they were just substantial dark green spires, busy developing soft little teeth-like dark green spikes. We discussed what they might be – a hardy grass, maybe? They were distinctive in size and shape, original looking – but there was no sign of blooms. We often walk the Fayetteville trails with our dogs but hadn’t seen anything resembling them.



Finally, they did start to bloom! The flowers were little pink dots nestled inside tiny soft spikes – as if the spikes were going to blow tiny bubble gum bubbles! As the flowers emerged and opened all the way, the blooms were between pink and lavender and reminded me of tiny Foxglove.

I had guessed them to be False Dragonheads (*Physostegia virginiana*) from perusing the Missouri Wildflowers book written by Edgar Denison (page 67). I also did additional research on the internet to try and identify the plant prior to blooming.

This plant also has another nickname, Obedient Plant. I think I have heard Lissa Morrison mention it when discussing her famous Well-Behaved Native Plant list.

Obedient plant is NOT a member of her well-behaved plant list! It spreads by rhizomes and can be invasive, but it is pretty and

the hummingbirds love it. It blooms in late summer or early fall, around the time hummingbirds are starting to think about migrating, so can be an extra source of nectar in late summer. We are working hard to get Arkansas Native Plants in our small neighborhood-sized yard. I have read that, unlike many of the native plants, the roots of *Physostegia virginiana* are shallow – which may make their spread easier to control. Right now, we are happy for them to run riot in our yard!

I think growing native plants from identified plants is more productive than starting from seed. Some natives grow easily from seeds, but others are hit and miss, at best. Still, I tend to love a mystery plant – especially AFTER I figure out what it is (or think I have).



**ABOUT TRUDY:** Trudy Carrigan was born in the Volunteer State and lived there for 27 years, then lived in the Golden State for 41 years. She retired and found a good life in Arkansas almost three years ago. She and her husband Carter enjoy traveling to state and national parks and other areas to observe the natural environment and surrounding beauty.

## Answering the Call

By Jennifer Ogle • Member, Wild Ones, Ozark Chapter & Collections Manager of the UA Herbarium

### volunteers relocate milkweeds and monarchs in trail's path

While scouting seed collection sites in south Fayetteville for the Arkansas Native Seed Program in mid-August, I noticed hundreds of tall green milkweed (*Asclepias hirtella*) plants growing in a privately-owned field near the City of Fayetteville's multi-use trail just east of Kessler Mountain Regional Park. I had walked that trail many times and was aware of big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), ashy sunflower (*Helianthus mollis*), white wild indigo (*Baptisia alba* var. *macrophylla*), and a few other species growing in the area that you would expect to find in a tallgrass prairie. In fact, many of the flatter areas in south Fayetteville were historically tallgrass prairie or savanna, and there are still a few small, degraded remnants hanging on today. Knowing this, I was not surprised to see some tall green milkweed growing in the area along with those other species. But to see hundreds of them?!? Now that was a surprise, and a very welcome sight.

However, I also noticed orange flags dotting the field where some of the densest patches of milkweed were growing and, being aware that the city had plans to build a mountain bike trail through the area, deduced the flags were marking the trail's path. I called an employee of the company who had been hired to design the trail and he confirmed my suspicion. During our conversation, the employee gave me the number of the landowner, who I then called to ask if we could move the milkweeds that were directly in the trail's path before construction began the following week.



An unexpected *cycnia* moth caterpillar (*Cycnia collaris*)



Deb O'Donnell and Nancy Harris  
move monarchs to safety.

Fortunately, the landowner enthusiastically agreed, and he even offered to ask the farmer who hayed the field to delay mowing so we could collect mature seed from the entire population later in the year for the seed program. I quickly emailed Eric Fuselier, President of Ozark Wild Ones, to let him know I needed help moving some of the plants, and he put out a call for volunteers. The Northwest Arkansas Master Naturalists also help spread the word on social media.

Some of you might know that tall green milkweed has a thick, woody rootstock that can grow quite deep in favorable soils. And as gardeners, you likely know that digging plants up in summertime is not a good idea, especially plants that have thick, deep root systems. And you have surely heard that we are in the midst of a global pandemic. What I'm trying to say is this was not the most ideal time to hold a plant rescue event. But the truth is, we rarely have much advance notice when we hear of native



plants in need of rescuing, and so we have to act quickly when we learn of a population in peril, no matter the time of year. And about the pandemic issue, we decided to limit the number of volunteers to no more than 10 people and make sure that everyone who offered to help agreed to follow recommended social distancing protocols and wear a mask when necessary during the event.



*Introduction and identification of milkweed by Isaac Ogle.*

I am grateful that five volunteers responded to the call for help. So, on a hot, humid morning in late August we gathered, shovels, gloves, and face masks at the ready, to dig milkweed plants. After a brief meeting that covered safety protocols, tall green milkweed identification, the proper method for digging the plants, and the importance of the work we were about to do, we all

set out to dig. In all, the volunteers dug 40 milkweed plants over about a two-hour period. They also carefully removed all the monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) caterpillars they found on those plants and relocated them to milkweeds that were out of the trail's path. We saw some fuzzy orange moths on the milkweeds that my iNaturalist app identified as unexpected cycnia moths (*Cycnia collaris*), so we moved them to safety too.



*Brian Powell*

Later that morning, my husband and I replanted the milkweeds in a safe, irrigated location where they could recover from the shock of being dug up in the middle of summer. I am happy to report that the plants are recovering from the shock, and some of them even sent up new stems a few weeks after being moved.

I want to thank Eric Fuselier and the NWAMN for putting the word out, and Nancy Harris, Rick Jones, Deb O'Donnell, Isaac Ogle, and Brian Powell for responding to the request on a day's notice and then enthusiastically and cheerfully digging plants out of dry, hard soil on a hot August morning.



*Milkweed rescuers*



**ABOUT JENNIFER:** *Jennifer Ogle is the Collections Manager of the University of Arkansas Herbarium. She holds a master's degree in biology from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville and has worked as a contract botanist and consultant for several government agencies, private companies, and non-profit organizations in Arkansas. She is co-editor of Atlas of the Vascular Plants of Arkansas (2013) and co-author of Trees, Shrubs, and Woody Vines of Arkansas (2020).*



## Native Gardening That's Low Input, Low Maintenance

By Willa Avery • Member, Wild Ones, Ozark Chapter & City of Fayetteville Horticulturist

I've been working in the horticultural world for the past four years, dabbling in organic farming, herbalism, and now as a horticulturist for the City of Fayetteville. Native plant ecology has captivated me from the start. While I have a dream to preserve or restore land of my own someday, I don't want to put off stewardship just because I'm renting.

This is a native planting guide for those of us who, like myself, don't have the resources or don't want to invest many resources into the place we find ourselves in the present, despite the desire to help restore habitat. Truly, the addition of any native plant to your yard, whether in-ground or in a porch planter, will assist in stitching together the ecological quilt that is our land. This "quilt" of habitat has been ripped apart by millions of acres of lawn and pavement, but we can still fix it. Pop in a milkweed here, an aster there, and insects will return, bringing their natural predators to repopulate suburbia.

My first Fayetteville rental was a gem. My 500-square-foot apartment boasted an expansive oak-shaded lawn, in which my landlady told me to "plant whatever you want!" I managed to assemble a mess of plants for free, mostly divisions from the more aggressive species residing in our city beds. After the first substantial rain in my new home in 2018, I noticed water pooling in a low section of my yard. I happened to have one lone buttonbush, *Cephalanthus occidentalis*, a water lover which happens to be a host plant for the black swallowtail butterfly. I dug up the water-logged Bermuda grass to find goopy, anaerobic-smelling clay and thought, "What have I got to lose?" I popped the buttonbush in, covered the newly grass-relieved area with brown paper, and hoped for the best.

I'm happy to say that the buttonbush is thriving to this day! Worms surfaced to eat brown paper as I continually replaced it, improving the soil slightly, and I never had to worry about grass encroaching as the buttonbush was better suited to the part sun flood zone. The same method has worked for me with aster, goldenrod, big bluestem grass, bee balm, Joe-Pye "weed" (I prefer plain Joe-Pye) and others. Introducing natives to your yard can be easy and fun, even without prior horticultural experience. Here is my guide to low-input, low-maintenance native gardening!

### Identify your planting space

Determine where you would most like to plant. Take note of how much sun your preferred area receives, as well as the soil quality of the space, since this will determine what can be planted there! A dry- and shade-loving plant will not survive in a moist sunny area, and vice versa. I recommend using a shovel to dig roughly 1 foot deep in several areas throughout your yard or existing flower bed to see what the soil texture is like. If you are renting, ask your landlord if they're ok with you improving the landscape. I've been lucky enough to be permitted to plant at two rental properties, neither of which had any landscaping prior to my arrival. However, both were (and still are) rich in invasive species.

Formal traditional landscape beds comprised of arborvitae, boxwoods, spireas and the like don't provide food for insects or, in my opinion, a whole lot of aesthetic appeal. If your home is a boxwood haven, know that you can replicate that formal style with native shrubs while adding food for insects and birds. In the absence of landscaping and maintenance, particularly along fence lines, invasive woody plants flourish, like bush honeysuckle, euonymus and privet. In the case of privet and honeysuckle, birds are the culprit for this prolific fence thicket. While both of these species offer berries to birds, they still out-compete small trees and shrubs which could feed far more species on foliage, a little cognitive

dissonance the birds can't avoid during their fence-line poop 'n' ponders. I recommend cutting invasives down as far as possible, within a few feet of property fences. The leftover stumps can be painted with glyphosate concentrate, a contentious yet effective method for killing aggressive species, OR you can leave the stumps and plant pushy natives in between to shade out foreign foliage as it re-sprouts. All this to say, appraise every corner of your yard space! Every inch of lawn or "dead" species removed and replaced with a native species equates a new habitat and food source for beloved bees, butterflies, birds and many other species.

If planting in ground isn't an option for you, consider growing in a container. Get creative! Traditional pots, raised beds, or window boxes are always great if you have them. If you don't, think about how you could use other containers such as laundry baskets, buckets, wheelbarrows, or even hollow tree stumps. If you're going to do a container planting, again, don't forget to keep soil texture in mind! Traditional potting soils are much too rich for some natives which, counterintuitively, require poor, sometimes even dry and rocky or heavy clay soil. Native grasses in particular tend to lose their dignity and really flop when overfed.

To remedy this in a container-planting situation, determine what type of soil your plant requires. [Missouri Botanical Garden's "Plant Finder"](#) can help! Mix a traditional potting soil with sand in a 1:1 ratio for plants needing well-drained soil. For those that thrive in clay, I recommend digging up small amounts of clay from various sites in your yard, place of work, or any place that will give you permission, never leaving a large or noticeable hole. Again, mix the clay with potting soil for plants that thrive in wetter, heavier soils. Lastly, make sure whatever container you use has drainage holes!

## what to plant

Plant selection depends mostly on three things: water, sun, and growth habit. I've named a few of my favorite low-maintenance natives, but there are many great resources available to help you decide. One of my favorite ways to narrow down plant options is by using the [Missouri Botanical Garden's plant-finder tool](#) under their "Gardens and Gardening" tab. Here, you can filter out unwanted plant options by selecting the attributes of your planting site and desired plant characteristics. Be sure you check the "Missouri Natives" box each time to discover plants endemic to our region.

For example, when I select "low maintenance", "dry soil", "part to full shade" and "Missouri Natives" that grow up to 3 feet, I discover Glade Fern (*Diplazium pycnocarpon*), Partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*) and American beakgrass (quite unfortunately deemed *Diarrhena americana*). From there, you can read descriptions of each plant and determine if it sounds right for your space. My other go-to resource for prairie and Ozarkian species is the [Missouri Wildflower Nursery](#). I request their free catalog once a year and use it as a study guide. If you would like to avoid shipping costs and buy endemic plants locally, I recommend the Northwest Arkansas Master Naturalists and [White River Nursery](#) in Fayetteville. Master Naturalists typically have four plant sales per year, and White River Nursery consistently carries many natives that are otherwise hard to find. Digging up lawn to sow a swath of seeds is not at all what I would consider low input, so I'm keeping my recommendations to grown and potted plants.

Generally speaking, trees and shrubs will be the easiest to maintain. Some shrubs and trees are known as "colonizers," meaning they can spread and end up looking weedy, so watch out for that. Forbs, aka non-woody flowering plants, will require extra care to weed around, as well as an occasional cut back to reinvigorate growth. Fall bloomers can be cut in the spring by half their height. Spring and summer bloomers may be deadheaded as needed. All forbs should be cut back to no less than 18 inches in



winter to allow overwintering insects to nest in their hollow stems. Personally, I enjoy leaving up dead blooms for winter interest, so I wait until the spring to cut most things down. Grasses that brown up in the fall and winter can be left as wildlife habitat, with one big cut in the spring before they re-grow. Cool season grasses, which brown in the warm weather, may be cut back in mid to late summer when they begin to rejuvenate. Consider all this maintenance before committing to anything!

## planting time

Once you have selected your site, removed woody invasives, and procured the appropriate plants, it's time for the installation! The "low input" or low maintenance is really determined by which plants you choose. A plant situated in the conditions that it has evolved to prefer will need very little attention once established; however, lawns and invasive weed species can still encroach and usurp your newly established plantings if you don't put in a little work initially. For success with this method, you will need:

- Spray paint, marking paint, or flags for marking planting area
- A digging tool (shovels and digging forks work best, although you may also need a rock bar)
- Loppers or clippers (for light root pruning if planting near trees)
- Newspaper, cardboard or brown paper (such as a shopping bag)
- Pile of brown leaves or straw bales
- Soil/sand or heavy soil mix OR available in-ground site
- Planting container
- Wheelbarrow or bucket to mix soil in (for container planting)
- Water

The best times to plant are mid fall when temps are still mild but not too hot, just before the first frosts and winter dormancy, or in early spring when nights are above freezing and the ground is beginning to warm. Summer planting is not advisable, as it requires a lot more time, attention and water to help new plantings survive.

If you're planting directly into your lawn, be sure to find out where your water lines and gas pipes run before digging! [Arkansas 811](#) (aka Arkansas One Call: 1-800-482-8998) will provide this service for free. When you're ready to begin planting, first lay your plant/plants out exactly where you want them to go. Use flags or paint to delineate a circle extending a couple of feet out from the root ball of each plant. If you're working with multiple plants and want to create a bed, draw an organic shape around all plants, again leaving a couple of feet along the edges.

After marking, remove the plants and grab a shovel! Dig roughly 6 to 12 inches deep, and remove grass and weeds from the surface, taking time to shake soil thoroughly off of roots. You can use a digging fork to loosen stubborn Bermuda grass roots and pull them out. You won't get them all, but that's ok since you've chosen plants that can compete with the grass! A rock bar may come in handy if you hit one that can't be dug out. You may also run into tree roots. I suggest moving your planting space away from roots to avoid cutting them. If you can't or don't want to change location, use loppers to snip the biggest sections of roots that cannot be dug out. When the grass and tree roots are mostly removed, dig just deep enough to place your plant so that its root crown is level with the soil surface. Soil should not smother the stem and the root ball should not be showing. Lightly tamp the soil down and water in your plants!

Next, cover the newly bare surface with a layer of paper or cardboard, watering again to saturate the paper. Last, add a thick layer of brown leaves or straw. Leaves should be raked and deposited whole so as not to disturb insects that may be pupating or over-wintering within. Wheat straw can be purchased at farm supply stores and typically costs \$5-6/bale. Be aware that the wheat seeds may germinate! After you've deposited this last fluffy layer, water again thoroughly. Continue to add paper and straw or leaves as it breaks down. This will serve as a mulch to discourage weed growth and encourage worms to improve the soil texture.

If a container is what you're dealing with, make your soil mix in a vessel separate from your planting receptacle. Position the container in its final resting space so you won't have to move it later, then fill your receptacle about halfway and have more soil mix ready to pack in around your plants. Add your tree/shrub/forbs and pack in soil mix until the root crown is level with the soil. Water and, as with the in-ground method, layer with paper and leaves or straw, then water again.

## source your plants

Perennial natives can often be obtained for free if you know where to look. Gardening friends, the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks, or the City of Fayetteville Hort team (aka me!) may have divisions of perennial grasses or forbs to give away every now and then. The City of Fayetteville also has an annual tree giveaway in the fall. I do not recommend ever harvesting plants or seeds from the wild, unless under the direction of an experienced botanist or ecologist.

Planting a native garden does not have to be rocket science, as they say, nor does it require hardcore botanical knowledge or a horticultural degree. There are so many resources at our disposal to help us choose the right species for our planting sites, and more nurseries than ever are carrying plants endemic to the Ozark region. In the words of Doug Tallamy, "Creating Homegrown National Park will require a collective effort from landowners everywhere." Whether or not you own land, I believe the native plant revolution is in the hands of people everywhere. We can each do just a little bit with what resources we have to stitch our land back together.

## willa's favorite low-maintenance ozark natives

For: Medium to wet, clay and heavy soil, full sun: **Willow Oak *Quercus phellos*** (large tree)  
Wet, heavy soil, part-sun: **Buttonbush *Cephalanthus occidentalis*** (large shrub)  
Wet to dry, heavy to average soil, full to part sun: **Beautyberry *Callicarpa americana*** (mid-size shrub)  
Dry to average, rocky and poor soil, full sun: **Aromatic Aster *Symphotrichum oblongifolium*** (compact forb)  
Dry to medium, well-drained soil, full sun: **Early Goldenrod *Solidago juncea*** (mid-sized forb)  
Dry to medium, rocky or well-drained soil, full sun: **Butterfly Weed *Asclepias tuberosa*** (compact forb)  
Wet to average, part to deep shade: **Bristle-leaved sedge *Carex eburnea*** (ground-covering) \*\*colonizer!\*\*  
Medium to wet, poor soil, full sun to part shade: **Switchgrass *Panicum virgatum*** (large grass)



**ABOUT WILLA:** Willa Avery became interested in sustainability and gardening during her service in Samoa with the US Peace Corps from 2014-2016. She now lives in downtown Fayetteville with her boyfriend Cale, the amazing Apple Seeds farmer, and two of their favorite invasive species, their cats JJ and Scruffy. When she's not digging around at the Downtown Square, which she landscapes as a City Horticulturist, she enjoys hiking, rock climbing and playing with her band, Dandelion Heart.



## Native *Euphorbia*: Easy to Grow, and Surprisingly Stunning

By Yannik Dwyer • Member, Northwest Arkansas Master Naturalists

*Euphorbia*, commonly known (less precisely) as spurge, is a strange and highly successful genus of over 2,000 plants spread across the world from Arkansas to Madagascar, with members that range in appearance from cactus look-alikes to your Christmas Poinsettia. Across the Ozarks there are more than a dozen native species, each with a unique aesthetic flair that all too often goes unnoticed.

These plants are easy to grow due to their toleration of a wide variety of soil conditions with a preference for poor, dry soils. They also commonly have seeds, which provide a food source for birds and contain a milky sap much like milkweed that makes them unpalatable to many herbivores. Lastly, though native spurges are rare to find at most garden centers, they're easy to grow from seed that is readily available online. Let's take a look at just a few.

One that might look familiar is *Euphorbia dentata*, also known as the green poinsettia, which indeed does look like a miniature poinsettia (maxing out at under 2 feet tall) with slightly glossy green leaves.

*Euphorbia dentata* isn't a stunner to be planted front and center, after all its flowers form in a petal-less clump for most of the year, but the nectar and seeds it produces makes it a great addition to a native community. Where it really shines is during the fall, when temperatures below 50 F turn the leaves around the flowers a rich purple-red, similar to its holiday-associated sister species.



These *E. dentata* next to my mailbox turned a maroon the first night where temperatures dropped below 50 F.



A member of the genus with a bit more immediate appeal is *Euphorbia nutans*, the nodding spurge. It again lacks showy flowers like the green poinsettia, but it more than makes up for it with its red, succulent stems and leaves which are more often than not splotted with purples. To heighten its rather unusual look, nodding spurge grows as an airy plant with stems covered in rows of small parallel leaves. When the growth reaches about 1.5 feet, it arches back towards the ground in a vaguely fern-like fashion, hence it being referred to as nodding.

This robust *E. nutans* has only a mildly red stem, but it does show of a large degree of purple blotching on the stem and its species' ability to grow in quite rugged soils like this gravel patch.



This pattern of growth means that *E. nutans* isn't likely to crowd out other plants and makes it a great flamboyant addition to any plant community.

*Euphorbia corollata*, the flowering spurge, is by far the most conventionally beautiful of our native spurges. It pulls this off with neat, 3-feet tall, cool-green stems and rounded leaves topped with bunches of white-petaled, yellow-centered flowers. As is so often the case with *Euphorbia*, flowering spurge has an exotic quality, as the green, bulbous seeds of the fruit mature significantly above the otherwise simple but effective flowers from an antenna-like structure.

*This E. corollata maybe a bit sparse due to growing in a field frequently cut for hay, but the handful of flowers it has managed to grow are delightful, with the older flowers growing their odd, green fruits above the corolla.*



**ABOUT YANNIK:** Yannik Dwyer is a undergraduate student studying Horticulture at the University of Arkansas and lifelong resident of Rogers. When he's not studying for class or volunteering with the Watershed Conservation Resource Center, he's usually found snooping around for native plants to grow and insects to collect in ditches and empty fields.



## Restoration Underway: Lake Springdale Trailhead Project

*By Steve Alarid • Member, Wild Ones, Ozark Chapter*

### how it began

The Wild Ones, Ozark Chapter, in cooperation with Northwest Arkansas Master Naturalists (NWAMN) and City of Springdale Parks and Recreation (SPR), has embarked on a new native landscaping challenge.

The goal is to restore a neglected rain garden and bioswale located at the Lake Springdale Trailhead Park adjacent to the Razorback Greenway. Back in February, NWAMN and SPR agreed to cooperate on the restoration. However, due to the high public visibility and the importance of getting an aesthetically pleasing design to succeed, the parties approached Ozark Wild Ones about joining the effort. Since our organization focuses largely on the use of native plants in landscape design, it was a good fit for a community project for our chapter.



*Trailhead Park rain garden, February 2020  
Photo courtesy of J. Perrodin*

The Trailhead Park is located within the floodplain of Spring Creek just north of J.B. Hunt Park in Springdale. SPR had included native landscaping in the rain garden and bioswale with good intentions when this new park was completed about five years ago. However, they faced two major challenges with the site.

First, Spring Creek has a large watershed at this location and will periodically fill its entire floodplain. The runoff and flooding problems are becoming steadily more severe as new areas upstream are converted to residential or commercial developments. Predictably, the new landscaping suffered during the heaviest floods. Second, SPR budget did not allow for more than routine park maintenance, such as lawn mowing and cleanup. When flood events caused a problem with the landscaping, there was no allotment of funding or personnel to “fix it.” The photos illustrate the deterioration of the landscaping as of this past February. This was the situation when NWAMN entered the picture to take on the native plant restoration with a volunteer force. Our chapter was invited on board very early in the discussions about how to approach the problem.

### what we did

Chapter President Eric Fuselier and Vice President Lissa Morrison, along with NWAMN Project Lead Jonathan Perrodin and SPR Director Zach Walls, developed an initial plan that basically involved Ozark Wild Ones contributing a project design. NWAMN contributed volunteer labor and native plants from Rose Gergerich’s NWAMN greenhouse, and SPR contributed funding for plant and interpretive signage materials, as well as normal watering as necessary. The plant species selections and layout were developed by Eric, Lissa and Scott Biehle, who also prepared CAD renderings to pass on to the NWAMN ground crew.

With project specifications in hand, Jonathan assembled his materials and work team. On Sunday, October 10, more than a dozen volunteers gathered on site to install the first wave of potted plants. Close to 100 plants were put in that day, all of which were propagated by Rose and the NWAMN Native Plant Team.

### what's next

In an after-action review session held Friday, October 23, with Eric, Lissa, Jonathan and myself, the discussion generally revolved around the topics of: What did we plan to do? What did we actually do? What would we do different next time? What steps actually come next? A very encouraging conversation led to a rough plan for the next phase of this project:

- Evaluate what remains to be planted;
- Determine the best types of stock and the best sources for the next wave of plants;
- Develop a funding plan with SPR;
- Begin preparations for the next planting session.



*Trailhead Park bioswale, February 2020  
Photo courtesy of J. Perrodin*

Not too surprisingly, there have been a few logistical and procedural hiccups along the way to get to this point. A solid funding plan is still developing. New cooperating partners are working out communications, expectations and roles. Plant material sourcing is a discussion item.

All these are normal growing pains, and the results so far have been well worth the effort. We expect to see this project gain momentum. We believe it will achieve its goals of providing a pleasing array of lowland flora in an urban park setting, enhancing ecosystem function by the use of Arkansas native plants and raising public awareness of environmentally responsible landscape design.

Stay tuned for news of upcoming volunteer opportunities on this...



**ABOUT STEVE:** *Steve Alarid served 33 years as a forester and firefighter with the U.S. Forest Service. He and his wife, Sherrie, have five children and seven grandchildren. His conservation affiliations include the Arkansas Master Naturalists and Ozark Chinquapin Foundation.*





## Ozark Wild Ones Column: Growing Together

*By Jasmine Dorn • Member, Wild Ones, Ozark Chapter Board*



Welcome to Growing Together, a quarterly column dedicated to the medicinal and culinary plants of the Ozarks.

Nature's variety is vast. Her ability to provide everything to support human and environmental health is inestimable. Why, then, do we often see the same types of produce at local grocery stores and farmer's markets? Stores import food from around the country and world, and local farmers grow predominantly the same range of non-native foods. Where are the native foods or medicines from our local terroir?

Food and medicine have become commercially centralized at the expense of local independence and security. As a people, we've let the empowering knowledge of the land fade away, and with it, our ability to nourish and heal ourselves without paying someone – likely a wealthy corporation – for the privilege. As further insult to indigenous flora, our broader society equates native plants with noxious weeds. Weeds that mar perfectly manicured grass lawns and as such, are targeted for removal, most often with chemicals that damage our local ecosystem.

It's time to change that. Every quarter, I introduce you to a native plant: a bit of the botany, growing and harvesting, and my favorite part – the ways the plant can be used to support and enhance health. It is my hope that this column will help build awareness of the incredible usefulness of native plants and inspire you to nurture their presence in your garden, yard, and community.

Let's grow together!



## Goldenrod's Midas Touch

Each of my senses enjoy each of the seasons differently, and autumn is my eyes' favorite season (followed closely by spring). All those vibrant, warm colors playfully extending from the earth to the tops of trees, inviting your eyes to dance from color to color across the landscape. Goldenrod heralds the end of summer and our approach into fall with its brilliant golden-yellow blooms swaying in the breeze. Goldenrod delights 115 species of specialist and generalist butterflies, moths, and caterpillars with its abundance of rich late-season nectar<sup>i</sup>. Humans have harnessed the numerous and diverse medicinal properties of goldenrod for thousands of years. Some of its more common medicinal uses are for kidney, urinary, and lung health, to correct microbial imbalances, for inflammation and infections, for skin disorders, as an overall internal ecosystem toner, and as – what may surprise some with seasonal allergies – a potent antihistamine.

In a nutshell, Goldenrod is as vital to our native ecosystem as it is enchanting to our eyes. It is a powerful healer for our bodies.

And now, let us begin discovering some of the many ways that goldenrod enriches human and environmental health.

### a bit of botany

Goldenrods are an herbaceous perennial in the *Asteraceae*<sup>ii</sup> family in the *Solidago* genus.

Globally, *Solidago* is classified into more than 100 species. These species crossbreed easily to form new varieties, making it difficult for beginners to distinguish between them.

Arkansas has over 50 named species and over 100 named subspecies listed at USDA.gov. All are listed as native to North America<sup>iii</sup>, though not all are native to our specific region within it. A few common varieties in Northwest Arkansas are *Solidago canadensis*, *S. caesia*, *S. drummondii*, *S. odora*, and *S. rugosa*. There is one known poisonous variety in the United States that is harmful to livestock (rayless goldenrod [*Haplopappus heterophyllus*]), but its reach is currently limited to southern Colorado into Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona<sup>iv</sup>.

Goldenrod, like most other wildflowers, is much easier to identify when in bloom.

Goldenrods kind of looks like a big yellow spear. That is, if the spearhead were made of lots and lots of little yellow flowers and flopped over to the side a little. While that may be true, here's something perhaps more useful to help you along:

- **Stands:** An easy way to spot pretty much all local species is to look for happy islands of golden yellow flowers anytime from July through October. They're patiently waiting for you in prairies and open woodlands, along roadsides and forest edges, and sunny, disturbed sites. They grow in stands of tall plants to around 4- to 6-feet tall and have long wood like stems that are usually unbranched at the lower section.
- **Leaves:** Their leaves are alternate, lance-shaped, 2- to 4-inches long, and unevenly whorled around the stem. Some species have soft, serrated edges while others have none, and I'm sure there's an infinite range of variation in between. Because you know ... easy crossbreeding and all that. 😊

- **Flowers:** Numerous yellow flowers form on branched inflorescence spikes which cluster (usually) at the top third of the stem. By now, you'd probably not be surprised to hear that the overall silhouette of the inflorescence will *also* vary across species. For example, in some species, the small flowers are neatly arranged on one side of the flowering spikes. (Which, P.S., adds a fun and unique dimension to flower harvesting! A satisfying *thump-thump-thump* as fingertips firmly glide up the stem and flowers pop off like miniature popcorn off the cob. But I digress.) In other species, the flower will cluster at the top.

There's little to worry about with all this variation across species. All goldenrod in NWA is not toxic to humans and livestock, and its broader structural, behavioral, and habitat similarities listed above will help you identify it with confidence.

## easy to cultivate

I often wonder why stunning native plants are overlooked for garden planning. Beautiful, disease and fungus resistant, drought and flood tolerant, they are a treat to the eyes, nose, and ears because of the birds and pollinators and wildlife they invite. Perhaps it is true that the common is rarely considered valuable.

I've created many (MANY) cultivated gardens in the past, all full of introduced species, and in comparison, native gardening is effortless gardening. It's easy to leave somewhat unsightly spent blooms in place or to trim plants down to 2 feet, knowing that I'm leaving and creating habitat for my little garden helpers.

If you don't have access to goldenrod in your native spaces, including it in your garden is easy. Plant goldenrod in full sun (some species can tolerate shade) and it's not picky about soil (did you catch the range of habitats they freely grow in?). As with any plant you put in the ground, don't let it dry out in the first season. But once it gets established, it'll be just fine with whatever Arkansas weather throws at it. The best time to move or divide them (root division) is in Spring or Fall. And if you don't want them to aggressively self-seed, deadhead the inflorescences before they seed. Easy peasy. 😊

## easy to harvest

Goldenrod itself chose the day that I harvested. I stepped out into the garden to clip some herbs and the late morning sun struck the goldenrod while its background was in shadow. It blazed its brilliant yellow blooms in the sun as the bees struggled to keep up with the inflorescent spikes swaying playfully in the breeze. And ... that's all it took to change my garden plans for the day.

Nota bene: All above-ground parts of the goldenrod can be harvested at any stage of its growth.



*As the sun sets, I cart my final Solidago and Passiflora incarnata harvest of the day homeward*

The best time of day to harvest leaves to use fresh or to dehydrate is in the morning after the dew has evaporated, but before the day's heat to concentrate the oils<sup>9</sup>. Pinch or snip leaves at the base of each leaf with clean fingers or pruners. Leaf production will slow down once the plant flowers, so if it's raw

salad greens you're looking for, harvest the leaves continuously throughout the growing season to stimulate leaf growth. Dry larger or older leaves to use in herbal tea blends or store for later use.

Flowers are best picked when the inflorescences have open and unopen flowers. Avoid the darker yellow/brownish flowers because they have been pollinated. It may feel tedious, but it is best to harvest multiple times to get each at perfect stage. And why not? Clipping inflorescence spikes will encourage continued leaf growth during the early summer but be mindful to let enough spikes grow from mid to late summer to allow it to reseed. If you're harvesting from your own land, you can deadhead the inflorescence to control reseeding.



Both the leaves and flowers easily air dry on days with low humidity. I air dry large amounts of herbs on an old screen door I repurposed and fixed up. Because reuse, repurpose, recycle. In that order, please, and thank you 😊

## healthful to humans

The more I learn about goldenrod, the more I think it deserves a book of its own. There are too many folklore stories and too many salubrious benefits of goldenrod to recount here, so I'll share a few benefits of particular interest to me.

- Goldenrod is used for kidney and urinary health. It breaks down kidney stones and is a strong diuretic that helps move toxins out of the body. Because of this, those with kidney issues should consult their medical professional before consuming goldenrod.
- It helps with microbial imbalances, particularly candida and fungal infections. It helps with infections in general, specifically of the bladder. A mouth rinse made from goldenrod tincture aids oral infections.
- It is anti-fungal and slightly astringent and can be made into a rinse or an oil infusion to incorporate into a salve for skin conditions like psoriasis or eczema. As a poultice or compress, it helps with inflammation.
- It's a potent flavonoid-rich antioxidant and is said to have 7 times more antioxidants than green tea.
- It might surprise some to know learn that Goldenrod is a powerful antihistamine that contains quercetin and other bioflavonoids, which make it a good remedy for seasonal allergies. Goldenrod is often blamed for them, but the true culprit is ragweed, a plant that likes to grow with goldenrod. It is a far less conspicuous plant than goldenrod, with its little green flowers. Ragweed has itty bitty pollen that floats on the lightest breeze to get easily inhaled by you and settle deep within your sinuses and lungs. Goldenrod is insect-pollinated and its pollen is sticky

### LATIN NERD ALERT

*Solidago* is Latin compound word combining the verbs *solido*, *solidare* (to make solid, whole; to strengthen) and *ago*, *agere* (to drive, urge, conduct).

The goldenrod species was named *Solidago* because of the health benefits it was used for.

... you know ... so it can stick to those little bug legs and bug butts and is far less likely to be airborne.

## so then, let's heal!

The key differences between consuming any medicinal herb as food or as medicine are dosage and frequency. You can enjoy small amounts in culinary applications for flavor, color, fragrance or even for a small immune boost regularly, but when you enjoy small amounts daily, or even multiple times a day, for consecutive days, weeks, or months, you're in the medicinal realm. It's hard to separate out the culinary versus medicinal uses of this plant, because every time you consume it, you're getting small doses of all those medicinal benefits.

Goldenrod is a powerful healing medicine. It is wise to treat it with respect.

Goldenrod's healing properties can be preserved after its growing season by making tinctures, decoctions, infusions, and essential oils or by dehydrating and storing the dried leaves and flowers.

## eat and drink

The leaves can be eaten raw or cooked at any stage of its development. Young leaves are best for eating while the older leaves get more fibrous and unpleasant to chew. The flowers are edible and make for lovely garnishes.



For some culinary flavor variety, try infusing different vinegars or oils with dried goldenrod flowers and petals. Its beneficial properties will transfer to the medium, along with that vibrant golden hue. I make nondairy butter using coconut and avocado oils, and it's a simple step to infuse the oils with goldenrod (in a warmer) before mixing the rest of the ingredients. Goldenrod nondairy butter, anyone? 😊

What other ways can you think of to use infused oils or vinegars for a little herbal medicine into your daily life?

Make an herbal tea blend to drink or to soak in but be warned that a little goes a long way. Two strong pinches in a bath tea bag will be enough. As with any herbal medicine, start small and increase only if needed.

## and be playful 🤪

Goldenrod is such a beneficial and useful plant, even beyond its medicinal, culinary, and environmental uses. In researching this article, I uncovered some cool ways goldenrod has been used. Some of my favorites:

- Goldenrod flowers inspired color names after the hue range of its blooms: "goldenrod," "light goldenrod yellow," "pale goldenrod," "light goldenrod," "dark goldenrod."<sup>vi</sup> And these colors are



so popular, all are included in the limited list of 140 named colors used in the website coding language, HTML<sup>vii</sup>. The circle between my former webmaster and current naturalist selves has now been closed.

- Goldenrod leaves contain a natural rubber that Thomas Edison attempted to use to make tires. Synthetic rubber beat him to the punch.
- Goldenrod flowers can be used to make dye. The color ranges from yellow to orange to brown, depending on when and how the flowers are processed.
- Goldenrod flowers are suitable for floral arrangements and the blooms last for 7 to 10 days.

With all its benefits and uses, it's easy to see why early cultures believed goldenrod brings good luck; others think it brings fortune.

Goldenrod should be celebrated for the ecological wonder it is. Seek out goldenrod next season and get more connected to nature.

Tune in to our natural world and always live in wonder.

## additional resources

We've just scratched the surface of the benefits of this amazing plant. And goldenrod is just one of countless plants around us waiting to be discovered, loved, and used. I invite you to continue your journey into goldenrod with these resources:

- USDA NRCS. Goldenrod Canadensis.  
[https://plants.usda.gov/factsheet/pdf/fs\\_soca6.pdf](https://plants.usda.gov/factsheet/pdf/fs_soca6.pdf)
- Edible Wild Food. Goldenrod Solidago.  
<https://www.ediblewildfood.com/goldenrod.aspx>
- Chestnut School of Herbal Medicine. Goldenrod : Medicinal Uses and Benefits.  
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## for educational purposes only

This information has not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This information is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. Consult your healthcare professional if you are pregnant, nursing, or are taking prescriptions before taking natural products.



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- <sup>i</sup> Missouri Prairie Foundation. Put Natives to Work. 2020 Grow Native Resource Guide. P2
- <sup>ii</sup> Commonly called the aster, sunflower, composite, or daisy family.
- <sup>iii</sup> For the complete list, search for *Solidago* within Arkansas at <https://plants.usda.gov/checklist.html>
- <sup>iv</sup> USDA Agricultural Research Service. Rayless Goldenrod (*Haplopappus heterophyllus*).  
<https://www.ars.usda.gov/pacific-west-area/logan-ut/poisonous-plant-research/docs/rayless-goldenrod-haplopappus-heterophyllus/>. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Accessed 2020/10/25.
- <sup>v</sup> NC State Extension. Harvesting and Preserving Herbs for the Home Gardener.  
<https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/harvesting-and-preserving-herbs-for-the-home-gardener>. Accessed 2020/07/01.
- <sup>vi</sup> Wikipedia. Goldenrod (color). [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goldenrod\\_\(color\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goldenrod_(color)) Accessed 2020/10/19.
- <sup>vii</sup> W3Schools. HTML Color Names. [https://www.w3schools.com/colors/colors\\_names.asp](https://www.w3schools.com/colors/colors_names.asp). Accessed 2020/10/20.