



Wild Ones Native Plants, Natural Landscapes
Louisville Metro Chapter, Treasurer
2601 Top Hill Rd, Louisville, KY 40206-2832
<http://www.wildones.org>

Louisville Metro Chapter Newsletter

Chapter Contacts:

LouMetroWildOnes@insightbb.com

- Portia Brown, 454-4007
President/ Newsletter Editor
- Mike Edelen, 895-7934
Vice President
- Amy Akin, (812) 923-1103
Secretary / Webmaster
- Rick Harned, 897-2485
Treasurer / Newsletter Editor
- Ward Wilson, 299-0331
Advisor/Wildflower Woods
- Phyllis Fitzgerald, 459-4803
Advisor/Publicity

2011 Meeting Schedule PDF – sent by email to members and posted on national website Louisville Metro Chapter page; hard copies available at meetings and on request. Please share with friends and neighbors. If you do not have email please check the calendar on the website. Also feel free to call chapter contacts to make reservations or suggestions.

Get Involved and Let us hear from you: We need people to help with sign in, set up, hospitality functions at every meeting. Can you help? Perhaps you'd like to see more plant/seed exchanges? Do you have articles or pictures to share? Can you help us with this newsletter or with posting events on the website? Can you help make the things you'd like to see happen? Contact Rick or Portia to get involved.

Re-cap 2010 Activities: In 2010 we continued to work in Wildflower Woods participating in spring *Garlic Mustard Sweep* and several more work days over the growing season. Josh Wyser led an especially informative meeting and work session for us. Phyllis Fitzgerald also led a work session on the Global Service Day. Rick Harned and Jerry Brown tabled at Jefferson Memorial Forest Fest. Several members hosted tours of their properties, including: David Calhoun's property where he tags

Monarch butterflies, Mike Edelen's woodland retreat at Raywick, Jerry & Portia Brown hosted a tour of their native warm season grasslands in Shelby County, and Phyllis Fitzgerald hosted a tour of her shade gardens. We planned an Herbivore Hike with Elizabethtown Greenspace. On Earth Day we joined in the activities at Red Orchard Park, Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education Grant (SFE) recipient. We celebrated Fall Equinox with a sunset hike through the restored Burnt Knob savannah atop Iroquois Park. Our chapter also made a memorial gift (pro-rata share of dues) to the Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education Grant funding. We returned to Red Orchard Park for our annual meeting in October where we toured SFE plantings, rain garden and enjoyed a lively program led by Dick Dennis. Dick is a member of Wild Ones and a volunteer naturalist with Bernheim. His program on Aldo Leopold generated some really good discussions.

Invasive Plant Flash Cards: These terrific flash cards available for purchase at each meeting. The cards make identification much easier and include information on control, degree of threat, distribution, origin and similar plants. The cost is \$8/set.

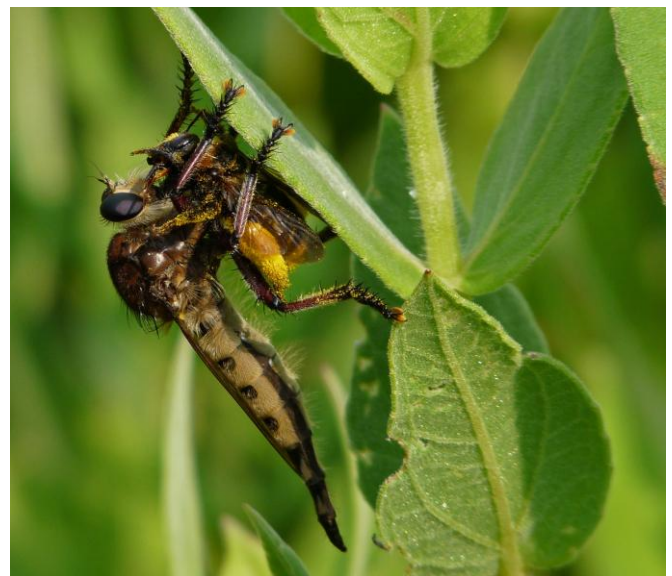


Figure 1: Who Are You? Name this insect?

Kathy Dennis took this picture last summer when we toured the Brown family's native grasslands. Mike Edelen gave us a common name that describes what the insect does. Do you know? Send your answers (those who were there are excluded) to LouMetroWildOnes@insightbb.com. The first right answer receives a prize.



Mailing Instructions:

- Straight dues & SFE gifts go to the national office at:
P.O. Box 1274, Appleton, WI 54912-1274
- Chapter gifts (with or without dues) go to the chapter at:
Louisville Metro Wild Ones Chapter
2601 Top Hill Rd.; Louisville, KY 40206-2832

Native Plants, Natural Landscapes

Note: you can also renew or join online at www.wildones.org

Louisville Metro Wild Ones Chapter DONATION / MEMBERSHIP	
Name: _____ Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____ New _____ Renewal _____ Paying for: <input type="checkbox"/> 1 yr <input type="checkbox"/> 2 yrs <input type="checkbox"/> ____ years <i>Membership and Donations are Fully Tax Deductible</i>	\$30 – Basic Wild Annual Membership \$50 – Wilder Donation! \$75+ - <i>Wildest Donation!!</i> \$200/\$500/\$1,000+ - Wild Businesses (\$20 - Full-time Student/Limited Income) _____ Annual Membership Dues _____ Local Chapter Gift _____ Eco Center Capital Campaign Gift _____ Seeds for Education (SFE) Gift _____ Total Amount Enclosed Please make check payable to: Wild Ones See mailing instructions above



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Wild Ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities. Wild Ones is a not-for-profit environmental education and advocacy organization. <http://www.wildones.org>

Have you become a member of Wild Ones? Or renewed your membership?

Your dues are essential for sustaining chapter activities,
plus getting you access to the resources offered by national!
See the back of page 1 for a handy new member/renewal form! Send it in today!

Starting a Discussion:

The following article about landscaping on the edge is included with this newsletter in the thought of generating more communication among members. The March meeting topic on Building Your Soil was suggested by Barbara Berman. Maybe you have insights on this topic? Also if you can help us facilitate such discussions, please let us hear from you. We tried Yahoo Groups and Ay Akin set up a Facebook page; however, many of our members are not familiar with or prefer not to use these tools. How can we best generate discussion among ourselves? Your ideas and skills can help. National offers great learning and sharing opportunities but we create vitality locally through our chapter's communication and activities. If you would like to see us have discussions on these or other topics, let us know.

On the Edge with Native Plant Landscaping!

By Portia Brown

Landscaping with native plants is grounded in the concept of using nature as a model with a focus on providing wildlife habitat. Thoughts of "edge effects," and "ecotone," are important considerations for the large scale management of natural areas and wildlife habitat. This article will bring these terms to the forefront, and apply them to smaller-scale and neighborhood landscapes.

Let's begin by exploring the terminology. The Encarta Dictionary defines **edge** in terms of border, brink, sharp side, vigor, advantage, and meeting surfaces. In neighborhoods our landscapes border one another and there may be sharp contrasts. As native plant enthusiasts we strive to preserve the vigor of natural communities. In our designed landscapes we try to give native, non-invasive plants an advantage. In ecology the meeting of contrasting environments is called the "edge effect" and occurs in transitional areas called an ecotone. Encyclopedia Britannica describes **ecotone** as:

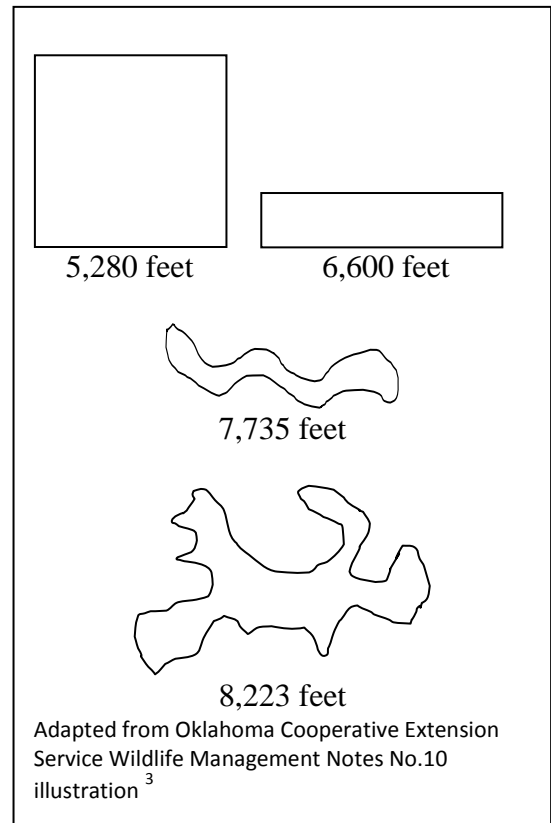
"...a transition area of vegetation between two different plant communities, such as forest and grassland. It has some of the characteristics of each bordering community and often contains species not found in the overlapping communities. An ecotone may exist along a broad belt or in a small pocket, such as a forest clearing, where two local communities blend together. The influence of the two bordering communities on each other is known as the edge effect. An ecotonal area often has a higher density of organisms of one species and a greater number of species than are found in either flanking community. Some organisms need a transitional area for activities such as courtship, nesting, or foraging for food."

Although residential neighborhoods are not likely prospects for replicating the full intricacies of an ecotone in a larger natural area, residential landscapes can provide elements of natural habitat for both plant and animal communities. It is important at the outset to recognize that the significance of edge varies significantly for different species. Not all species will benefit from increased edge, increasing wildlife abundance is not truly a direct correlation with increased edge, and fragmentation of large scale natural habitats remains a primary concern for preservation of many species.¹ Your yard is not going to fully replicate a natural forest, grassland, or wetland in terms of space or vegetation structure or diversity of wildlife species; however, you can have a small water feature, a shade garden, and an open space teeming with life. Ideally whole neighborhoods could embrace these concepts and indeed there are residential developments that have done just that, such as Prairie Crossing north of Chicago in Grayslake, Illinois.²

The most obvious tangible application of edge effect in native landscaping is associated with designing for wildlife habitat. So, in addition to using native plants in our yards, we may consciously choose to amplify diversity by increasing the amount of edge along and between our plantings, planting in layers, and otherwise mimicking natural habitat. Although border plantings are commonly used in conventional landscapes, natural borders tend to be more varied. Rather than a single species border, we can opt for several complementary species and place them in a less uniform manner. A mixed border in shade might intersperse ferns with flowering species or grasses and sedges with flowers in sun. Both sun and shade might incorporate shrubs for a taller screening effect or to simply vary the vertical elements of a space.

In addition to using a variety of plant material, we can stagger the placement to create more edge. In designing our landscapes to increase edge, irregularly curved planting beds provide far more edge than perfect circles and rectangles. Several small unevenly curvilinear beds can also provide more edge area than one large planting bed. So the amount of edge you can provide is a function of both the shape of your plantings beds and their size.³

Even though boxy elements such as foundation plantings, sidewalk and driveway borders may present straight edges you can use nature's model of layers and ecotone to create a landscape that is both aesthetically pleasing and generally more attractive to some species of wildlife. You might use an existing canopy tree to mimic a forested landscape by adding an understory tree, some shrubs, and herbaceous woodland plants with an intentionally uneven border. Then you might transition into a more open semi-shaded area along part of this woodland border; perhaps a swath of short stature native grasses or sedges. The semi-open area might adjoin a full sun planting bed. Bard Edrington of Living Edge Landscaping in Albuquerque provides an inspiring description of this process: *"Life thrives on the edge. ...Because the Earth's natural tendency is to maximize life, the river twists back and forth to increase the edge. When we increase edge in our gardens, we increase opportunity for life. We do this by meandering paths, making canopies and under-stories with plants, bringing people and animals into the garden, and having a biodiversity of plants."*



By this time you have quite a lot going on in the relatively small space of a residential yard and this brings us to another dimension of the edge in natural landscaping. In natural areas the ecotone or interface of two distinct plant communities is double edged in that it may provide an opportunity for food and shelter or it may pose a danger from certain predators. Similarly in a neighborhood the interface between native landscaping and more linear conventional landscapes can create an opportunity for greater understandings and appreciation, or the danger of misunderstanding and conflicts with one's neighbors.

In other words the edges we create for wildlife could make some of our neighbors downright edgy; however, we can take steps to alleviate and possibly even transform concerns. These steps are best taken early in the process of designing a natural landscape. Share your excitement about using native plants with your neighbors *before* you start to help build understandings at the outset. Keep them in the loop as you progress to flush out concerns in the beginning and provide opportunities for finding a happy medium. Remember your yard alone will not repair habitat fragmentation and the seminal idea is to build bridges, not barriers, to understanding and learning. It is important to recognize that a designed residential landscape or even whole neighborhood cannot in and of itself resolve issues surrounding fragmentation of

natural communities. The term ecotone relates to blending of adjacent communities; for native landscaping to be successfully assimilated into common practice there will need to be a blending of conventional and naturalistic practices. You or your neighbors may have issues with the interface between horticultural (bulbs, non-invasive non-native species) or edible landscapes (vegetable gardens or fruit trees) and the wildlife attracted by more naturalistic landscapes. Acknowledging these matters and knowing how your neighbors feel can help you decide how to best design your space.

Gradual staging of your landscape plan helps the learning curve for you and your neighbors, not to mention being easier on the budget. As for edges, it is best not to start your grand plan along the property line; beginning with planting more interior spaces such as along the foundation or under existing woody species. Over time your plantings may feather out toward your neighbor or you may want to keep a higher contrast between the yards. Hardscape elements may be helpful in some situations. These may be as simple as benches, birdhouses, bird baths, or decorative elements that visually communicate a positive welcoming cared for space. Sometimes screening elements such as tall hedges or privacy fences may come into play; if so, wildlife will benefit from openings to allow passage at ground level.

Along the way and in the end, good maintenance is quite simply the best practice all the way around and of course along the borders or property lines. Clean out birdhouses seasonally, keep the water fresh in the birdbaths, repair broken hardscape features and generally maintain a sense of order in your yard to benefit the birds and the interface with the neighbors. Keeping your yard neat and tidy doesn't have to mean ball bushes and uniform turf carpets; but, it does mean keeping planting beds well mulched and weed free, properly pruning woody plants, some deadheading of flowers, and regularly mending fences while nurturing new life. It also means mowing any remaining lawn areas on a regular basis.

In most cases having a certain amount of mown turf is desirable for several reasons. From a purely aesthetic perspective, the openness of lower profile mown areas provides a relief for the eye to really see and appreciate more complex areas. Mown areas can provide intermediary space between your yard and a neighbor's space. In order to easily mow around your planting areas, the mown edge may be a looser curve while the actual plant footprint within a mulched bed could be far more irregularly edged. A mown height of 4 inches is all that is really needed to maintain a healthy lawn and is the guideline to follow on slopes or erosion prone areas.⁴ In nature, edges can be high or low contrast. Transitional areas adjacent to turf or between trees and shrubs may include swathes of sedges or short stature native grasses. A lawn appears much shorter in juxtaposition to a tier of short meadow grasses planted next to taller woody plants. This stepping effect mimics nature and is more aesthetically pleasing than a yard chock full of tightly interlocked and rangy looking shrubs or herbaceous plants. Layer the height and space around your major landscape elements, and vary the edges, to better see the forest from the trees in your small scale naturescape.

There is another dimension of edginess we can consider and that is the fact that native landscaping is quite literally on the cutting edge of today's landscaping trends. Like the potential dangers and opportunities of an ecotone, the growing acceptance of native landscaping has some edges that could cut either way.

On the sharp or dangerous side, the negative possibilities may include:

- The popularity of native plants sometimes leads suppliers to wild harvesting that is harmful to the natural source community and generally unsuccessful. Ethical propagation is vital to preserving natural communities while expanding the presence of native plants in the designed landscape.
 - The prospect of focusing on individual native plants without truly using nature as our guiding light. This could lead to hybridizing or otherwise cultivating native species to the point of being deleterious to indigenous genetic strains. Preferably the focus would be on the natural model of plant and animal communities and a desire to preserve, restore, and re-establish these communities.
 - Bringing out the rancor of local "weed police" is not going to induce long term positive changes in public perceptions or on the ground improvements. The whole movement is set back and benefits are lost every time a
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native landscape installation fails to resolve issues in the human community. Our ability to communicate effectively about our goals and our willingness to compromise in ways that respect conventional practices can preclude this negative potential.

- Further, if the landscaping industry embraces native plants without standing up to invasive species, then the goal of landscaping in harmony with nature is gutted.

On the more positive, advantageous side is an opportunity for the growing popularity of native landscaping to:

- Enhance appreciation for natural communities (as opposed to specific native plants) and stimulate a new landscape ethic that consciously blurs the lines between built and natural communities.
- Develop models for native plant naturescaping that balance society's need for order and structure with the beneficial aspects of more naturalistic designs; models that begin to answer questions like:
 - Where and how can your habitat overlap with that of bats? Or damselflies and dragonflies? Or snakes?
 - What natural communities are our best models?
 - How can availability of ethically propagated and appropriate plant material be promoted?
 - What are appropriate transitions between looser naturalistic plantings and more controlled functional areas (such as cars, garbage, pedestrian accesses, and recreational uses)?
 - What combinations of natural and conventional design elements are best suited for residential/urban communities? Or for commercial landscapes? Public spaces?
- Bring about broad ranging action to eliminate and preclude future import of exotic, invasive species (such as requiring long range testing of plant materials before allowing the marketing of new species and provide incentives for property owners to remove invasives). This may be the single most important potential of the movement for the immediate future.
- As we learn about our native plant communities we may more actively embrace stewardship of our natural resources, and ultimately generate community based conservation and restoration initiatives. As our society embraces "greener" solutions to population and climate issues, the native landscaping movement helps us reexamine the interface of human and non-human players.

You can tip the balance by living on the edge! Become a student of nature to experience natural order first-hand and then share your experiences with others. This means gradually and respectfully building bridges to blend edges on the neighborly side. After all, the more "edgy" your landscape, the more you'll want to share it with your friends and neighbors (seeds and cuttings, too).

Has this exploration of edge and ecotone stirred your thoughts about native landscaping? I would love to hear from you at simplynatural@insightbb.com; perhaps we can ponder further on the positive edge. Meanwhile, go forth and thrive on the edge of new beginnings and happy endings!

Author Portia Brown is a Creative Consultant with Simply Natural Landscape Concepts and President, Louisville Metro Chapter Wild Ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes

Footnotes:

¹ Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service Wildlife Management Notes No.10 Edge and Other Wildlife Concepts <http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-5198/Edge%20L-276.pdf>

² Prairie Crossing <http://www.terrain.org/unsprawl/9/> and <http://www.villageofgrayslake.com/DocumentView.aspx?DID=352>

³ This is illustrated on page 6 of the document shown here Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service Wildlife Management Notes No.10 Edge and Other Wildlife Concepts <http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-5198/Edge%20L-276.pdf>

⁴ Kingston, Ontario Utilities website <http://www.utilitieskingston.com/about/>