



One of many vignettes of Kelly Grummons' yard.  
*Photo by Deb Lebow Aal*

## June 2022 Newsletter

*Edited by Colleen Lyon*



Leonard's Skipper  
*Photo by Judy Gallagher, [some rights reserved.](#)*

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Join or Gift a Wild Ones Membership  
today!

# Upcoming Events

***Important notice: From here on out, we will be announcing our events to members only, first, as our events are popular and sell out fast. So, if you are not a member, please consider becoming one!***

## Fort Collins Private Native Garden Tours

Saturday, July 16, 2022  
9:00am - 11:30 am

Join us as we tour two native plant landscapes in Fort Collins. Click [Fort Collins Private Native Garden Tours](#) for more information.

## Cherry Creek Renovation

Sunday, July 24, 2022  
9:00 am - 11:30 am

Join us for a tour of a one-mile long renovation project of Cherry Creek in Southeast Denver. Done primarily for flood control, the area was fully re-planted with native forms, grasses, shrubs, and trees. You can [Register Now!](#)

## Nederland/Boulder Tour, Wildflower Walk and Social

Sunday, July 31, 2022  
10:00 am - 2:00 pm

\$10 for Members and \$25 for non-members

Join us as we explore a Wild Ones Front Range member's garden and neighboring Roosevelt National Forest at 8200 feet, between West Boulder and Nederland. Registration closes July 27th, so [Register Now!](#)

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## Plant a Native Shrub This Summer!

*by Richard Phillips*

When you were making your list of new native plants to add to your yard this past spring, I bet it contained all forbs with no shrubs or trees. Everyone wants to add more beautiful flowers! This article is to encourage you to add shrubs to your yard this year.

You might wonder, "Why would someone want to add a homely shrub to their yard?" My personal belief is that shrubs have an inherent beauty without the flashy colors of a forb. My main motivation, though, is to provide more food for birds, insects and other pollinators, whose populations have precipitously declined in the last few decades.

As we learned from Doug Tallamy, in his book *Nature's Best Hope*, local native insects feed and breed on native plants. They have evolved side by side over eons and the insects have overcome the chemical toxins produced by their host plants; they can't feed on non-native plants because they are not adapted to them. Tallamy and his colleagues researched data on native plants in each county of the United States and determined how many different insect species use those plants as a host.

This information is available on the [National Wildlife](#) and [Audubon](#) websites, where you can enter your zip code and it will provide a list of native plants (trees, grasses, forbs, shrubs) for that area, and the number of insect species that use each plant as a host.

The book goes on to explain that the more insects a plant hosts, the more caterpillars it



produces. Birds need to collect thousands of caterpillars to feed their chicks (the preferred food for chicks); without which the chicks will not survive and the bird population will decline. You know the words of John Muir, “When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.”

Well, it turns out that trees and shrubs host a lot more insects than forbs do! For example, Gambel oak trees are host to an astounding 221 insects, while chokecherry shrubs host 261 insect species. Some of the most attractive forbs for insects are sunflowers and goldenrods, which serve as hosts to only 69 and 79 insects respectively. The conclusion is that if you want to help increase bird and insect populations, plant more trees and shrubs!

Generally speaking, shrubs are also easier to plant. You don’t need to worry about many of the things you typically worry about when planting a forb or flower bed. (When does the forb bloom? Which flowers should I plant next to it? What color are the blossoms? How do I keep the weeds out of the bed?) Shrubs can easily be planted along a fence row, out of the way and without having to ask yourself too many questions.

There are dozens of native Colorado shrubs to choose from, as well as good resources that list them. One excellent source, in a brief format, is the Colorado State University Extension Service Fact Sheet, [Native Shrubs for Colorado Landscapes – 7.422](#)

Personally, here are my four favorite shrubs for the yard:

- Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana melanocarpa*)
- Serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*)
- Mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus montanus*), and also curl-leaf mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus ledifolius*)
- Gambel oak (*Quercus gambelli*) - I know, this one is a tree; more on that later.

**Chokecherry** grows in a tall, cylindrical or vase-like shape with rich foliage. In the spring it is covered with clusters of blossoms, which turn into berries that the birds love. There is one in my yard that stands by itself at the corner of the lot and is over ten feet tall and nearly as wide. On a recent trip to Steamboat Springs, lots of chokecherry shrubs loaded with blooms were visible along the dirt roads through Routt National Forest!



Blooming chokecherry in my yard



Chokecherry bloom detail

**Mountain mahogany** is the tough shrub you find growing in rugged dry spots at the edge of the short grass prairie and into the foothills. It doesn’t have dense foliage; but has an attractive, small, ribbed leaf. It is known for the characteristic corkscrew wing attached to the seed.





Mountain mahogany shrub



Spiral tail on Mountain mahogany seed

**Serviceberry** is a small to medium-sized shrub that is one of the first to bloom in spring. Small white flowers turn into red fruits that attract birds. Rumor has it that it got its name from being used for decoration in the funeral services of people who died in the winter and couldn't be buried until the ground thawed in the spring.



Serviceberry shrub shrub



Serviceberry leaves and flower

**Gambel oaks** have medium-sized leaves with the typical lobed leaf pattern of oak trees. They can grow as a single trunk or with multiple trunks like a shrub. I think of them more as a shrub or a cluster of small trees, like you see them at Roxborough State Park. The best way to grow them as a shrub is to select one in a pot at the nursery with several trunks. You can also convert a single-trunk tree into a shrub pattern by trimming off the leader, so it branches outward.





Gambel oak "shrub" in Roxborough Park



Gambel oak leaves

All four of these shrubs are perfectly adapted to our local soils and climate. After the first year or year and a half to get started, they will not need any supplemental watering. You can buy these and other native shrubs from nurseries specializing in native plants such as [Harlequins Gardens](#) in Boulder or [Colorado Native Plant Nursery](#) near Greeley. Of course, a limited selection is available from some of the larger local nurseries which don't specialize in native plants. Call them for more information.

Another option, which is more fun, but more time consuming, is to start your own shrubs from seed. You can collect your own seeds from the field or buy them from suppliers such as [Western Native Seeds](#) in Coaldale. The easiest thing to do is put the seeds in 2.5" pots and leave them outside through the winter to go through the cold stratification process. Germination of these plants in my experience is tricky, so I recommend planting at least 10 pots, each with several seeds, and if you're lucky you may get 3-5 plants germinating in the spring. It's probably best to keep them potted for a year before planting in your yard.



One-year-old Mountain mahogany started from seed and transplanted to a one gallon pot.



Two-month-old Serviceberry started from seed.

Hopefully, this article has provided enough information to motivate you to dig a hole in your yard and plant a shrub. Nature needs our help and this is a small yet literally 'bigger' way to assist!

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# So Many Better Alternatives To Non-Native Turf

by Deb Lebow aal

Here we are again, talking about grass. I mean the Kentucky Blue Grass (KBG) and other non-native expanses we use as our default landscape. We wrote articles on this in past Wild Ones Front Range chapter newsletters ([March 2021](#) and [July 2018](#)), but just as I was seeing the tide turning on non-native turf (as evidenced by the bipartisan-supported state [turf replacement bill HB 22-1151](#) and [Aurora's proposed restrictions on non-functional turf](#)), I got a surprise lecture on the advantages of a KBG lawn from a gardening expert. So, I scrapped the article I was originally writing to address this issue again.

The unexpected speech was as follows: We need KBG because: 1) kids and dogs need a place to run around; 2) it provides cooling in a hot environment; and 3) it contributes moisture to this dry environment through evaporation.

Are these true? Yes, perhaps, except there are alternatives to non-native grass that can also achieve these goals with added ecological benefits, and without the distinct disadvantages of non-native turf. Two key disadvantages include:

1. An expanse of KBG is an ecological dead zone, supporting very little or no wildlife
2. KBG is actually quite needy. It requires a lot of water to thrive here on the front range (why one might praise it for “contributing moisture” when it’s simply just sending the water it needs back into the environment). KBG also demands “pochkying” (Yiddish slang for “fiddling with,” e.g., mowing and adding fertilizer and pesticides, if you want it weed-free). I suspect this gardening expert was thinking that the alternative to a KBG lawn is rock – pure rock - with no plants. Otherwise, huh?

The reality of the problem is that we have over 40 MILLION acres of lawn in this country. That’s the size of New England. That’s 40 million acres of a water-thirsty, ecological deadzone, as stated above. And, very little is ecologically healthy - Doug Tallamy says that only 5% of the land in the lower 48 states is in its natural state. We have logged it, tilled it, grazed it, mined it, built on it, paved it, drained it, etc. We’ve carved up the natural environment so much that what’s left is tiny fragments, not enough to support a healthy ecosystem. We have the insect apocalypse and bird population decline to show for it. So, if you think your little piece of land won’t help, and that it is up to our national parks and other public land to do the heavy ecosystem lifting, we have to think again.

As for the water needs of KBG, the amount of water the average Denver metro area household uses for landscape irrigation (55% or more) is simply unsustainable. This is not a future problem. An emergency federal order was just issued on June 14 for the seven states that comprise the Colorado River Basin to come up with a plan within 60 days to slash water use by millions of acre-feet to stave off a potential collapse in the Colorado River system ([more info on that here](#)) And (for now), I won’t even get into the carbon footprint of mowing!

So, what are our alternatives? Here are three great ones for starters.

**Native Grasses.** Here on the front range of Colorado, Buffalo Grass (*Bouteloua dactyloides*) is one heck of a solution. It is a drought resistant North American prairie grass that can make soft, dense, verdant lawns with a fraction of the water that KBG needs, little or no mowing, no pesticides or fertilizer, and it provides habitat for numerous species of insects. It grows 5” tall and has lovely seed-heads if left unmowed. Or mow it monthly for a more familiar, neat turf aesthetic. Admittedly, it won’t hold up as well as KBG to very heavy foot traffic for sports, but it can tolerate moderate traffic to provide an area for children and dogs to run around. Like KBG, it will cool down a hot environment, but the roots of Buffalo Grass go down much deeper than KBG (12-14 inches deep for buffalo grass, whereas KBG is about 1-2 inches deep), and for that reason will retain moisture in the area very well. It also sequesters carbon in those deep roots, and is resilient to weather extremes. What are the downsides, you ask? It is a warm season grass so it won’t come out of its winter dormancy and green up as early as non-native turf. On the other hand, once established, a Buffalo Grass lawn will remain green during the peak summer heat when traditional non-native lawns will turn brown without heavy irrigation. So



that would be my number one solution.



Buffalo grass, stays brown longer in spring.  
Photo by Richard Phillips



Buffalo grass in its green glory.  
Photo by Richard Phillips

A Blue Grama grass (*Bouteloua gracilis*) lawn is a beautiful native solution too. Blue Grama is co-dominant in short grass prairie with buffalo grass and is often seeded for a native turf mix with Buffalo Grass. Blue Grama reaches 1 foot tall and has attractive blue seed heads if left unmowed. Blue Grama is one of the host plants for Leonard's Skipper and the common branded skipper. However, it does not like to be trampled, so it is not a solution to the running kids and dog problem. Kelly Grummons' [Dog Tuff Grass](#) is another alternative for areas where you would like to walk or, as the name says, where you have heavy dog traffic. While it requires a lot less water than KBG and is very resilient, it is not a native plant solution.



Blue grama grass

**Less lawn.** Shrinking your lawn to half its size is another solution. By expanding your flower beds, and planting mostly native plants, you will solve much of the problem. Tallamy suggests that if everyone cut their lawn size in half, and planted native plants on that half, we'd have 20 million more acres for [Homegrown National Parks](#). He also suggests we switch the paradigm from lawn as the default everywhere, with a few foundation plant beds, to native plant beds as the default, with lawn as the pathways and/or small areas for sitting and playing.

**More prairie.** For non-trafficked areas, you can also plant a prairie meadow by seed. It does require proper site preparation, regular maintenance up front, and a careful selection of native grasses and forbs to make sure the plants you want don't get out-dominated. This is not a solution if you like a neat-looking landscape, and it does not particularly like being trampled, but once established is low maintenance, and the insects, butterflies and birds you will attract will be astounding.

We will have a whole other article on how to take out your turf, but for now I'd say start slowly. Take out one piece where you'd like to see more insects and beautiful plants so that you don't get overwhelmed. Make sure you plant native plant species there. Xeric plants are good for water conservation, but if they are not native, they will not render the ecological services we need. And, do some research (see our website) on which species to plant, as not all native plants are xeric.

In an [article in the NY Times](#) this month, the always amazing Margaret Renkl suggests strawberries (*Fragaria virginiana*) as an alternative to lawn, suggesting you can walk on it. I have yet to see this in real life, and I don't know whether it would actually survive on less water than a conventional lawn here on the Front Range, but it's an intriguing and delicious idea.

And I do want to emphasize we are not saying kill the lawn, although there are [many books](#) to that effect. If you love your lawn, try some alternatives to KBG, or just shrink the size of it. As always, if you plant even a few native plants, you will be helping solve some of the ecological problems we now face. I know there's much more to discuss on this topic, so please send comments and/or your "before and after" turf replacement pics to us [here](#).

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## Announcements and Acknowledgements

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### Tribute to David Salman (1957-2022)

By Diane Stahl



If you are in the native plant community anywhere in the west, you have probably heard of the untimely passing of David Salman. We at Wild Ones Front Range chapter are heartbroken.

If you did not know David by name, you probably knew his online businesses (High Country Gardens and Santa Fe Greenhouse). Being the founder with his wife, Ava, this propagation business brought numerous plant introductions to the nursery trade - and to our landscapes. David was also a founding member of Plant Select®, a regional plant introduction organization.

Of late, David had been concentrating his efforts towards seed collecting on only native species. He opened Waterwise Gardening, a wholesale business that specializes in growing and breeding native plants for arid and high plains.

A renowned propagator, David gave us knowledge and access to water-wise plants and local pollinators. In March 2020, Wild Ones Front Range partnered with David on a highly successful program where David shared his adventures of collecting and "birthing" adaptable species. We were in discussions with David on another program about nativars.

Kelly Grummons, owner of Cold Hardy Cactus (himself an expert of native plant seed collecting) comments, *"The Front Range horticulture industry would not have been as prolific and come this far without David's expertise, passion, and critical plant collection."*

Showy, waterwise, and pollinator-friendly Agastache are some of his favorite plants to develop. Other introductions include cold hardy Cacti, Lavender plants, Hesperaloe (Texas Yucca), Salvia plants, and many more. In David's FlowerKisser™ plant line, perennial introductions are especially nectar-rich to nourish bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. And Blonde Ambition grass (*Bouteloua gracilis*) is a new favorite of landscapers.

David died on June 5, 2022, in Santa Fe New Mexico, where he lived most of his life. You can read the article about David in the [Santa Fe chronicle](#). His knowledge of the plant world and enthusiasm for the natural world in general, were beyond extraordinary



and he will be missed.

If you would like to honor David with a contribution, his suggested organizations are:

- [HaMakom General Fund](#)
- [Espanola Valley Humane Society](#)
- [Kindred Spirits](#)
- [Rocky Mountain Seed Alliance](#)
- [Santa Fe Botanical Gardens](#)

**David's native and water-wise plant introductions (also [linked here](#)):**

*Agastache aurantiaca* 'Shades of Orange' (2003)  
*Agastache* hyb. 'Ava' (2004)  
*Agastache cana* 'Rosita' (2008)  
*Agastache* hyb. *Desert Sunrise*® (2000)  
*Agastache* hyb. 'Desert Solstice' (2010)  
*Agastache rupestris* (1996)  
*Agastache rupestris* *Glowing Embers*® (2002)  
*Aloinopsis* hyb. 'Psychedelic' (2007)  
*Aquilegia* aff. *longissima* *Swallowtail*® (2000)  
*Berberis fendleri* (Taos Co., NM collection) (2005)  
*Bouteloua gracilis* 'Blonde Ambition PP#22,048 (2011)  
*Delosperma dyeri* *Red Mountain*® *Flame*  
*Hesperaloe parviflora* 'Coral Glow' PP#29,626 (2018)  
*Hesperaloe parviflora* 'Straight Up Red' (2016)  
*Lavender angustifolia* 'WWG02' *FlowerKisser*™  
*After Midnight* English Lavender (2019)  
*Lavandula angustifolia* 'Wee One' (2014)  
*Monardella odoratissima* 'WWG04' *FlowerKisser*™ *Arizona Beauty* (2019)  
*Muhlenbergia reverchonii* (2008)  
*Salvia greggii* 'WWG03' *FlowerKisser*™ *Coral Pink Sage* (2019)  
*Salvia* x 'WWG01' *FlowerKisser*™ *Dark Shadows Sage* (2019)  
*Salvia greggii* 'WWG05' *FlowerKisser*™ *Royal Rose Sage* (2020)  
*Salvia* hyb. *Raspberry Delight*® (2000)  
*Salvia pachyphylla* (2004)  
*Salvia pachyphylla* *Blue Flame*' (2006)  
*Salvia sylvestris* 'Little Night' PP#28,925 (2016)  
*Scutellaria* hyb. 'Dark Violet' (2010)  
*Sorghastrum nutans* 'Thin Man' PP#28,923 (2014)  
*Sporobolus wrightii* 'Windbreaker' (2006)  
*Veronica* hyb. *Blue Reflection*® (1998)  
*Zauschneria garrettii* *Orange Carpet*® (1998)  
*Zinnia grandiflora* 'Gold on Blue' (2012)

### Native Plant Sales

Here are some other opportunities to buy native plants.

**City Park Farmers Market:** Urban Roots, a small space and sustainable landscape design company, will be selling xeric and native plants at the City Park Farmer's Market, located at Denver's East High School (Colfax and Columbine), the second and fourth Saturday of the month, May 14 through October 29, 2022, 8am - 1pm. A Wild Ones volunteer may be on hand to answer questions on planting native plants and the significance of having a native plant landscape.



**High Plains Environmental Center:** Place your orders on-line. For more information, please see their [website](#).

And of course, when you shop at our local nurseries, ask for Colorado native plants!! The more we ask for 'em, the more they'll want to stock

native plants.



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***We love to hear from you, and we are always looking for people to write articles for the newsletter. If you would like to comment on anything in this newsletter or write an article, please send your comments or ideas to [FrontRangeWildOnes@gmail.com](mailto:FrontRangeWildOnes@gmail.com).***

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