



Photo (featuring the playful blue wave of *Linum lewisii*) by Deb Lebow Aal

June 2023 Newsletter

Edited by Colleen Lyon

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Join or Gift a Wild Ones Membership
today!

As a WOFR member benefit, we now have Member Matters newsletters (on the off-months between our quarterly newsletters), which features “Ask CSU, Extension” - a new column where amazing horticulturists at CSU answer any native plant questions you may have. Yet another reason to become a member of our chapter! If you are a member, please [send us an email](#) with the questions you would like CSU to answer.

Native Plant Swaps

June is the month of PLANT SWAPS! Wild Ones is partnering again with other great organizations to host **Plant Swaps and Giveaways in Fort Collins and Denver**. Swaps are fun and festive events to get more native plants in the Front Range landscapes to improve our ecology, expand your native plant palette and save precious resources. Spread the word! Participants need not bring plants to take plants, but of course, please share some of your garden’s bounty if you have extra native seedlings and plants to share! (Please pot up and label each plant as specified on the event pages that follow.)

Volunteers are needed for a successful event—see the many ways to get involved at the event web pages. You can make a difference!

June 17th - Ft. Collins Plant Swap at the Ft. Collins Xeriscape Garden Party, 300 La Porte Ave, Ft. Collins (same location as last year!)

June 24th - Denver Pollinator/Native Plant Swap and Giveaway at Earthlinks, 2746 West 13th Avenue, Denver (same location as last year!)



Pollinator Plant Swap
Saturday, June 17, 9 a.m.-noon
Xeriscape Demonstration Garden, 300 Laporte Ave.

Dig up, divide and donate pollinator plants grown free of chemicals from your garden. No plants to swap? No problem! You do not need to donate to take plants home. Please bring your own bag or box to take your new plants home.

We welcome donations of any pollinator plants, including native & non-native flowers, trees, shrubs, vegetables, herbs & other edibles. We are highlighting native plants at this swap because of their importance for native pollinator conservation. All plants are grown by volunteers and community members.

Donating plants? Please review the following guidelines:

- **Label plants:**
 - Latin name and common name (all plants except vegetables must be labeled with Latin name)
 - sun requirements (sun, part shade, full shade)
 - water requirements once established (very low, occasional, regular)
- **Plants must be grown free of chemicals** to protect pollinators. This means no herbicides, pesticides, fungicides or synthetic fertilizers.
- To protect our natural areas, **we cannot accept plant donations that are listed as noxious weeds** by the CO Dept. of Agriculture ([view list](#)).

Questions? Contact xeriscape@fcgov.com

This event is brought to you by: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, League of Women Voters, Nature in the City, People & Pollinators Action Network, Wild Ones Front Range Chapter, Northern Chapter of the Colorado Native Plant Society, One Canopy, Wildlands Restoration Volunteers, and City of Fort Collins



DENVER POLLINATOR NATIVE PLANT SWAP & GIVEAWAY

SATURDAY | JUNE 24 | 10AM-1PM
Earthlinks: 2746 West 13th Avenue, Denver CO

New and seasoned gardeners - bring propagated native plants or salvaged native plant volunteers from your garden or just drop by to learn more about natives and pick up new native plants of your choice.

Please only donate plants that are regionally native and not noxious/invasive or treated with synthetic pesticides or fertilizers.

Attendance does not require you to bring native plants, but we hope that in our third year many of you are willing to share from plants you've received at past seed and plant swaps to directly contribute to this movement.

Questions? Contact Peggy Hanson at pegshanson@gmail.com



Scan the QR code or visit the link to learn more about this event!
<https://fronrange.wildones.org/denver-plant-swap-landing-page/>



Native Plants for Cut Flowers

By Helen Skiba

Finding a native plant that also works as a cut flower can be challenging! Cut flowers need to stand up to plenty of stress, especially if they are going into arrangements that will be out of water, in the sun, or worn as a boutonniere or hair adornment.

Let's start with basic cut flower requirements, native or not. First, consider the stage of the flower's life. A flower that has already been pollinated has done its job and will quickly senesce or fall off the stalk. This is why cut flower producers do their best to cut flowers early, often before they have opened. For example, snapdragons are cut when only $\frac{1}{3}$ of the florets on the stem are open, and we cut sunflowers as soon as petals begin to rise from the disk face. Cutting early gives you much more vase life, and the flowers will be at their peak a day or two later if kept at warmer temperatures. This means you have time to cut and arrange and allow them to open fully before any event.

When should you cut? Always try to cut flowers in the early morning. At this time, they're full of the water they've been drinking overnight, and they're not releasing moisture to the air, because their stomata are closed. Definitely don't harvest if temperatures are over 80 degrees. Cut your stems at a 45 degree angle; this gives the flower more surface area through which to drink water, while also keeping it from sitting flat on the bottom of the vase, which might keep it from drinking. Cut a nice long stem: you might need it. Once you've cut the flower, strip any foliage off that will be underwater. This prevents rotting leaves in your arrangement and prolongs the flower's vase life, while also making more room for stems in the vase.

Get the flower directly in water as soon as possible! The more time the cut end is out in our dry Colorado air, the more likely the pores of the plant's xylem are to close and scab over, making it impossible for the flower to drink. Your water, vases, and buckets should be clean enough that you would drink from them. Your shears or snips should be very clean and sharp, too. Sharp shears mean sharp cuts that slice the plant, rather than crushing it, which leads to more entry points for bacteria in the stem. If possible, allow the flowers to sit for at least 3 hours in a cool place before working with them, but overnight is best.



Flowers last longer in cool, dark places. My commercial cooler is kept at a chilly 36 degrees and most flowers love it. If you're not using your flowers right away, a basement or garage fridge, with the temperature turned up slightly, can work wonders, or put the flowers in that one really cold closet in the house. Beware that some flowers will not like this treatment: zinnias & basil come to mind.

The other way to prolong a flower's life is to keep its water clean and fresh. The reason flowers begin to wilt (besides just the fact that they've been beheaded and not many creatures can tolerate that for very long) is that bacteria begin to grow on the stem and clog the vascular tissues. If you can keep the stems and water free of bacteria, you'll get longer vase life.

You do not need to give your flowers food. The best thing for them is very clean water. Most commercial flower foods contain three things: a biocide, an acidifier, and sugar. The biocide, often chlorine, prevents bacterial growth. The acidifier helps the plant drink more and opens its xylem pathways. Sugar continues to feed the plant, and is said to keep colors more vibrant. If you wanted to make your own plant food, you could try a drop of bleach, lemon juice or vinegar, and a bit of dissolved sugar. The only thing I've ever used is a drop of bleach in each 5-gallon bucket I harvest into. This works really well and allows me to hold flowers in the cooler for weeks. If you avoid bleach, try hydrogen peroxide - you'll have to add more to get the same effects.

To get the best life out of any arrangement, change the water daily, and re-cut the stems if you see them shriveling or getting mushy.

Now that you know how to treat your flowers, which flowers should you use? I found this question hard to answer! There are so many suitable flowers that already exist in your landscapes that I'm sure I couldn't address them all. But all you really have to do is test them to see if they work. To test flowers, adventurous florists offer the following kinds of challenges to new flowers:

- In water test: Does the flower withstand being cut and placed in water at room temperature? For how many days does it still look presentable?
- Out of water test: simply set the flower on a table out of water, and out of direct sunlight. Can it handle it? How many hours until it's very very droopy? Flowers that can last more than 5 hours in this state are candidates for out-of-water applications like boutonnières or flower crowns.
- Hydration chamber: If flowers don't perform as well as you'd like in the out-of-water test, try treating a new specimen in a hydration chamber and re-testing. A hydration chamber is simply an airtight box, like a Tupperware container, lined with moist paper towels. Place the flower in here for 6ish hours, and then repeat the test. Does the flower hold up longer? The theory is that the plant will imbibe water through all its tissues, not only the stem, plumping it and allowing it to hold up out of water much longer.

But here are my suggestions for native flowers that work well as cuts:

- *Rudbeckia hirta* (Black-eyed susan): these sunny ladies are wonderful, happy additions to bouquets. Their stems are hairy, which can lead to more bacteria

build up. They can also be wilted, especially in direct sunlight. Harvest before the anthers on the central cone have begun to appear, and when the petals are more upright than parallel to the ground.

- *Lisianthus* (Prairie gentian): while the hybridized varieties most commonly used by florists may not really be natives anymore, this is an excellent cut flower, lasting for weeks in the vase and days out of water. A true gem. Cut it before it starts to make pollen and you'll have a winner.
- *Achillea* (Yarrow): this old standby is a fantastic cut and a great dried flower, too. Cut it *after* it starts to make pollen, or it will wilt on you.
- *Gaillardia* (Blanket flower): I am such a fan of these! My favorite variety is 'Lorenziana', a double-flowering variety available through Wild Garden Seeds. Cut it early, before it starts to make the ball-shaped seed head in the middle.
- *Helianthus* (Sunflower): Colorado classic! These have hairy stems like *rudbeckia*, so keep an eye on their water or add bleach. Cut them as the petals are pulling away from the central disk, or at least before they start putting out their anthers. The pollen can be a nuisance.
- Larkspurs: A huge favorite of mine. Go for stems that haven't fully opened to the top; harvested at this stage, they can last a long time, and the little spurred buds can be great additions to glued floral art like corsages or crowns. Plus, you can't go without that true blue color.
- *Cleome* (Rocky Mountain Bee Plant): I grew these for cuts last season and really loved them - they're so unusual and intricate. They're hard to cut on time, as the lower florets senesce before the top of the inflorescence really gets going, but you can always strip off any browning florets down the stem. They can be spiny, and they're also sticky, so beware!
- *Ipsomopsis aggregata* (Scarlet gilia): I've not tried this as a cut myself, but its stunning red color makes it worth a test or two. Again, harvest as the lower part of the stem is opening, hopefully before too many pollinators get their fill.
- *Clematis virginiana*: I've often used this for draping bouquets, wrapping arbors, and informal flower crowns. I think it would benefit from a hydration chamber treatment. Try to cut it before all the flowers are open - the little round buds make it even more beautiful. In the fall, I adore the wispy pinwheel-like seed pods.
- *Penstemons*: These succulent plants are wonderful cut flowers that do great in water, though I've not tried them much. Again, with spike flowers, cut when the lower third or half is open.



Please reach out if I can answer any more questions! helen@artemisflowerfarm.com



Blanket Flower, Gaillardia pulchella, 'Lorenziana' featured on Artemis Flower Farm's website:

"Saw this beautiful photo on Hannah Muller's Instagram, [@farmerhands](#), and just had to have them! They look like bachelor buttons in warm, deserty colors. She got seeds from [Wild Garden Seed](#)."

Artemis Flower Farm is an ecology-focused flower farm between Boulder & Longmont. We grow specialty cut flowers for florists, brides, and lovers of beauty. We offer on-farm gardening and floral design workshops, bouquet subscriptions, wedding design, and much more. You can find out more about us at www.artemisflowerfarm.com

Ditch the Peat Moss!

By Ayn Schmit

Sustainability of the materials we use in our landscapes is an increasing focus for many gardeners, from the use of gravel mulch (gravel mining harms rivers and wetlands) to the source of soil amendments. Gardeners in the U.S. have relied on peat moss for years for its ability to retain water and improve soil structure. Almost every bag of potting soil or other amendments (think Sheep and Peat) at the nursery contains significant amounts of peat moss. Why is that a problem? Peat moss is mined from a rare and important type of wetland called a peat bog. Although peat bogs make up only 3 percent of the earth's surface, they hold 15-30 percent of the carbon. Turns out, peat bog mining releases that carbon, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. And wetlands provide many other ecosystem services that we rely on—important wildlife habitat, and slowing and retaining water on the landscape to prevent flooding. But sadly, 90 percent of the world's wetlands have been

damaged or lost over the past several centuries. Many of my Environmental Protection Agency colleagues spent years trying to slow and prevent the destruction of wetlands.

Yet another great reason to transition your landscape to native plants! The good news is that in most cases they prefer lean mineralized soils and don't actually like organic amendments—not too surprising as they evolved to thrive in our clay-rich Colorado soils. So you'll have very little need for organic amendments such as peat moss in your native landscapes. Where you do need organic amendments there are alternatives such as coconut coir and wood-based amendments. Talk to your sustainability-minded local nursery or check out this link for [making your own potting soil recipe](#)—and ditch the peat!

Get Involved

Join a Board Committee!

The Wild Ones Front Range Chapter is run by volunteer committee and board members. One of the most impactful ways for you to support us is by becoming an active committee member!

No experience is required - just bring your passion for native plant gardening. Thank you for helping us deliver on our mission! [Email us](#) to learn more.

Colorado Gives Day Campaign Manager

Manage our campaign for Colorado Gives Day, including setting up our profile on the Colorado Gives Day platform, developing a series of promotional messages, and tracking results.

Newsletter Co-Chair

Team up with the other co-chair to manage our content calendar, author content and further streamline how we produce our newsletters.

Regional Coordinators for Colorado Springs & Boulder

Organize local member meetups to learn from each other's native plant gardening journey.

Secretary - Board Member Position

Manage board meeting logistics, take board meeting minutes, and maintain chapter records.

Swaps Co-Chair

Team up with the other co-chair to organize plant and seed swaps.

Volunteer Chair

Identify ways to recruit, recognize and reward volunteers.

Chapter Updates

In Memoriam: Jan Gorski

It is with heavy hearts that we inform you of the passing of



Jan Gorski, longtime Wild Ones Front Range chapter member. Jan was a wonderfully active member who contributed mightily to WOFR's plant and seed swaps and Propagation Committee. Jan passed away in May. She passed peacefully in her sleep with family by her side.

Regional Member Meet & Greets

Thanks to all of the members who came out for our May Member Meetups in Boulder and Arvada. Our Regional Coordinators are already planning more gatherings for members to connect with and learn from each other.

We are still looking for volunteers to be Regional Coordinators for Colorado Springs. Please [email us](#) to learn more.



Arvada Meet & Greet



Boulder Meet & Greet

Want to stay in the loop on Member Meetups in your part of the Front Range? Join a Regional Email Group!

Some member meetups are only communicated in these email groups due to capacity constraints, so join your local group and don't miss out!

Send an email with your name and member number to the appropriate Regional Coordinator below to join a regional email group:

- *Boulder County:* [Emily KenCairn](#)
- *Denver Metro:* [Donna Baker Breningstall](#) or [Deb Lebow Aal](#)
- *Douglas & Elbert Counties:* [Pam Schulz](#)
- *Jefferson County:* [Laurel Starr](#)
- *Larimer & Weld Counties:* [Suzie Muttel](#)

Groups that still need members to volunteer as Regional Coordinators:

- *Colorado Springs*

WOFR Native Plant Toolkit is Live!

We are finally live with the Native Plant toolkit. The toolkit's mission is to help anyone to be a successful native plant gardener on the Colorado front range. We have published:

- The outline, or what this toolkit will cover
- How to Use this toolkit
- Why “Coloradoscape” with Native Plants (in other words, why landscape with native plants)
- The Hardest of Hardy Native Plants for Denver
- Native Trees for Colorado's Front Range
- Native Plants that Tolerate Shade
- Replacing Turf - Goals and Approaches
- Native Plant Seed Collection and Germination.

We will be publishing a few more pieces very soon. You can view the [toolkit on our website](#). This toolkit is a living document, meaning we publish as soon as we feel a document is good enough, not when it is perfect, and we encourage your feedback. Please [email us](#) your comments - we look forward to them!

Board Member & Committee Updates

Vicki Saragoussi Phillips is now our Programming Chair. Vicki contributes so much to ensure that our programming has engaging content and runs smoothly. Thanks for all you do Vicki!

Karen Rider has joined the Programming Committee to help produce educational programs for our chapter. Welcome Karen!

Linda Young has left the Secretary position. Thanks Linda for your service!

Propagation Committee Spotlight

The Propagation Committee has been very active under the leadership of Pam Schulz and Jan Midgley with monthly virtual meetings or in-person workshops. Thirty-one members participate in experimenting with propagating natives and sharing notes. Variables include soil, stratification methods, indoor/outdoor trials for numerous native species. The committee is currently experimenting with 267 trials involving 174 different species—many of which are hard to come by in commercial nurseries. Happily, results will be synthesized and will be included in the Propagation Resources on the WOFR website's toolkit. In addition, some of these successful efforts will be generously donated to the Plant Swaps this month (see related article). The chapter gives a special thanks to Pam Schulz and Jan Midgley for their leadership, time and effort.

In February, the committee met in Denver to socialize, learn some new techniques, sow some seeds for outdoor winter stratification, swap seeds and potting supplies as well as discuss other activities over the summer.



In May, several of the committee members met to sow some Spring-sow seeds and take a little hike.



Advocacy News and Action

Expanded Rights to Xeriscape

By Robert Greer

Single-family homeowners in homeowner associations (HOAs) will soon have greater rights to install xeriscaping under the new [Senate Bill 23-178](#), which was signed by Governor Polis yesterday and will go into effect in September or so.

The bill was created to fill some gaps in existing legal protections for xeriscaping. Originally, although there was a nominal prohibition against HOAs limiting xeriscaping, HOAs still had power to disapprove gardens for aesthetic considerations. This amounted to

a huge loophole, since HOAs could just say they didn't like how your proposed xeriscaping looked and reject it for aesthetics reasons that were entirely subjective.

Prime sponsors of the bill were Senators Sonya Jaquez Lewis and Perry Will, and House Representatives Karen McCormick and Mandy Lindsay. I did this with my friend Max Nardo with the Colorado Senate Democrats and the People and Pollinators Action Network.

Under this new state rule, HOAs will be required to choose at least three professionally pre-planned designs from places like the CSU Extension [Plant Select program](#), or a municipality or water utility. These HOA-chosen designs will be deemed to meet the HOA's aesthetic standards, though HOAs can still restrict plans for bona fide safety or drainage concerns. Also keep in mind that your local municipal or county government may have rules that independently limit your ability to xeriscape that this HOA law doesn't impact. Which may be a good opportunity for local advocacy!

The new law will also require HOAs to accept vegetable gardens in front and side yards. This includes not just common garden vegetables and fruits and greens and, but also pollinator plants, herbs, flowers, etc., and includes both raised garden beds and ground-level beds. This is also an opportunity to plant natives, as virtually all natives will be either pollinator plants, or edible, or be herbs. HOAs will also be required to give homeowners some option that consists of at least 80 percent drought-tolerant plantings – i.e., they can't require hardscape on more than 20 percent of the landscaping area.

(Unfortunately, SB 23-178 only applies to people in single-family homes, but if you're in a multifamily home, at least you know your home is likely [more environmentally sustainable in other important respects, such as energy use and land use.](#))

If an HOA fails to follow this new rule, a homeowner can sue for actual damages or \$500, whichever is greater, after giving 45 days' notice to the HOA of the violation. Under existing law, the prevailing party can also collect attorney fees and costs. But we're hoping that the 45-day letter will be enough to get HOAs in line and that litigation won't be necessary. Once the law goes into effect, Wild Ones Front Range Chapter plans to have a sample letter people can provide to their HOA to get that ball rolling and preserve your right to save water and money and support local ecosystems.

Let's Put Colorado on the Map!

By Michelle Kinshella

Yes, Colorado is on the road map, but we are poorly represented on the [Homegrown National Park](#) map, the brainchild of Doug Tallamy. Many of us native plant gardeners have been inspired by Doug Tallamy, an entomologist, ecologist and conservationist; professor at the University of Delaware in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Biology; and author of *Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in our Gardens*, *Nature's Best Hope*, and *The Nature of Oaks*. In short, Mr. Tallamy is a guru in the native plant world, and if you haven't heard him speak, you are missing out. He will give you hope for the planet, and make you feel like you yourself can have an impact on climate change and our biodiversity crisis.

One of Doug's main missions is to promote his idea of the "Homegrown National Park." In the U.S., there are 40 million acres of lawns according to a 2005 NASA estimate derived from satellite imaging. Doug's goal is to get one-half of those acres—20 million—planted with native plants. He is working tirelessly to accomplish this goal: HE WANTS US ALL TO GET ON THE MAP.

As of April 20, there were 78,752.06 acres planted native, which is 0.39 percent of Doug's goal of 20,000,000 acres. However, Doug recognizes that Rome wasn't built in one day, so the 2023 goal is 125,000 acres. We are almost half-way through 2023, but this is the time of year when many of us are adding new native plants to our yards. Consequently, this is a great time to update your square footage numbers if you are already on the Map - or create a new account if you aren't. We are 63 percent of the way there already! We can do this!

There are 400 Wild Ones Front Range members, and as of the writing of this article there are only 183 Coloradans on the Map. In fact, Colorado ranks 28th out of 51 states (50 states plus Washington D.C.) in terms of active users as a percentage of total population. In our beautiful state of people who love the outdoors, we are not even in the top 50 percent. Not surprisingly, Delaware-where Doug spends his time teaching-is ranked first, followed in order by Vermont, Maryland, Virginia, Maine, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Ohio.



[Click here to
GET ON THE MAP](#)

Follow this link to create your account and start adding your native plant data to the map!

Doug recommends you create an account even if you don't have any native plantings yet (although I bet most of you do). There is also a helpful "How-To Video" link located at the top right of the map page, if these instructions don't make sense or you want more details.

In my experience, the hardest part of getting on the Map is calculating the area of your plantings. If you're a typical homeowner, your preferred units will be square feet (ft²). So you need to get out there with a measuring tape and do your best to measure the square footage of your native plant areas, and then guesstimate their square footage at full maturity, which is the figure you enter. Chances are, your native plants won't be planted in perfect rectangles, but it doesn't have to be exact.

Also, if you can't remember the planting date, it doesn't matter. If you know you planted the flowers in the summer of 2020, pick any date during that time. The planting date is simply to track acreage growth over time.

So let's inspire ourselves and our fellow native plant gardeners, while living up to our Colorado identity as nature lovers and get on Doug's map! It will make you feel like you're part of the solution.

Upcoming Events

Check out our website's [Events List](#) for more info and to register for events!

Important notice: We announce many of our events to members first, as our events are popular and sell out fast. So, if you are not a member, please consider becoming one!

Colorado Native Plants You Shouldn't Live Without

Led by Wild Ones Front Range Board Members

Saturday, June 10

10:00 - 11:30 am

2023 Northern Colorado (NOCO) Plant Swap

Saturday, June 12
9:00 am - 12:00 pm
Fort Collins

Jefferson County Garden Crawl

Saturday, June 17
9:00 am - 1:00 pm

Third Annual Denver Native Plant Swap and Giveaway

Saturday, June 24
10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Denver

Tour of Denver's Greenverein Garden at Turnverein

Saturday, July 8
9:00 - 11:00 am
Denver

We love to hear from you! 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.

Wild Ones Front Range Chapter | <https://frontrangewildones.org/>

