



*Leucocrinum montanum*, Star Lily  
(photo by Mack Hitch)

## March 2024

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Become a member today!

## Consider Native Sedges in Your Landscape

*By Jonathan Sciarcon*

Sedges are “grass-like plants” in that they have skinny green stems, but they are not grasses. Sedges, unlike grasses, are in the Cyperus (Cyperaceae) family, have solid, triangular stems (occasionally round). They are not jointed or hollow like grasses. When looking at the stem, you can see the leaves are in three columns. The sheaths are usually closed, unlike grasses. There’s one seed (an achene) per flower, which looks very different from a grass seed (a grain); it’s lens-shaped or three-sided, possibly sporting hairs or bristles around its base. They are chiefly wetland plants.

### Comparison of Sedges and Grasses Stems and Leaves

- Sedge: solid, triangular; closed leaf sheath



- Grass: hollow, round; open leaf sheath



“Sedges have edges” (photo credit: [www.ohioplants.org](http://www.ohioplants.org))

Over the past half decade, sedges (*Carex sp.*) have gained increasing popularity in native landscapes on the east coast, so why not here? The [Mt. Cuba Center](#) at the University of Delaware recently published results on a multiyear study on the performance of various sedges in different light and moisture conditions. While the Mt. Cuba Center focused on sedges for the mid-Atlantic region, in this article I want to highlight a couple of low-water native Colorado sedges that are well suited for Front Range landscapes.

Sedges have numerous ecosystem benefits. Notably, they are a host plant for certain moth and butterfly species. They also improve soil and water quality and prevent erosion. As they are cool season plants, sedges come out of dormancy in early spring and can compete against non-native and invasive cool season plants before more aggressive warmer season native grasses enter active growth. Additionally, several native sedges can adapt to low water conditions and even survive in landscapes without active irrigation systems.

The two native sedges I have begun introducing into my landscape are Plains Oval Sedge (*Carex brevior*) also known as Short-beaked Sedge and Heavy Sedge (*Carex*

*gravida*).

*Want to learn more about these two native sedges (including propagation process)?*

*Read the full article!*

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## Time for Coloradoscaping to Replace Xeriscaping

*By Richard Phillips*

In the dry steppe environment of eastern Colorado, for years we have been directed to reduce the water consumption of our landscaping by using the Xeriscaping guidelines developed and promoted by Denver Water (and others) since the 1980s. These concepts have been so ingrained in our gardening ethic, that I see them referenced in gardening literature and guidelines in Fort Collins, Boulder, Denver, Aurora, Colorado Springs and a multitude of other Front Range Cities. Nurseries advertise plants that meet Xeriscaping standards. Water providers promote the use of Xeriscaping in their lawn replacement rebate programs. It's now time to replace the term Xeriscaping with the more modern concept of Coloradoscaping, which promotes the use of regionally native plants to take advantage of their inherent low-water needs and many other ecological benefits.

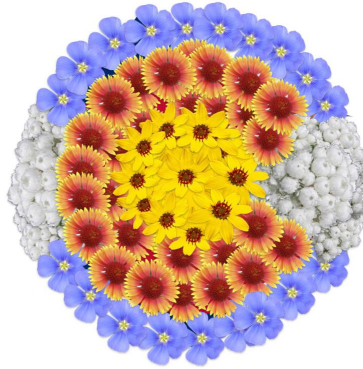
Let's start with a short history of the Xeriscaping concept. Xeriscaping is the term coined by Denver Water back in 1981 for a landscaping technique that prioritizes water conservation. One of the primary tenets of Xeriscaping is to plant grasses, flowers, shrubs and trees that only need minimal water to thrive. As we all know, that's a primary characteristic of most plants native to the Front Range. However, plants adopted by the practitioners of Xeriscaping include drought-resistant plants from other regions of the United States and even from other parts of the world, typically from regions that have an arid steppe climate like Denver.

For example, the classic, beautifully illustrated, Xeriscape Plant Guide, published in 1996, by Denver Water and others, includes details on 123 plants that thrive in this climate [*most of them not native to our region... see link below to full article*]. As a side note, there is a group of plants chosen and developed because they meet the Xeriscaping guidelines. These plants are developed and marketed under the registered trademark of Plant Select. These cultivars are selected, bred and promoted by a collaboration between Colorado State University, Denver Botanic Gardens and professional horticulturalists. Many of the plants in this collection are not native to Colorado or even North America. You can see this trademark on plants sold at nurseries along the Front Range.

So, Xeriscaping sounds like a great concept if your only concern is water conservation. Coloradoscaping takes the concept to a new level, by focusing on landscaping with regionally native plants that are inherently low-water users, but also contribute to the local ecosystem by supporting native insect populations, which are the basis for the natural food chain – plants, to insects, to birds and other small animals, to predators.

*Want to dive deeper into Coloradoscaping?*

*Read the full article here!*



## Ask CSU Extension Anything (About Native Plants)



**QUESTION:** *Can you give us a "water report?" What can we expect in terms of drought for Front Range planting, gardening and landscaping?*

*Get the answer!*

*Answer developed by: John Murgel, Extension County Specialist, Horticulture and Natural Resources, Douglas County, Colorado State University Extension*



*Have a  
question about  
native plants?  
Ask us here.*

## Chapter Updates

### Toolkit Spotlight



#### *Colorado Native Plant and Seed Sources*

We'd love your help! WOFR is planning to update our list of local nurseries that sell and promote native plants. One of the barriers for people trying to add more native plants to their landscapes is the lack of information about where to buy them. Our goal is to make it easy for Front Range residents to find a nursery that reliably has native plants to offer. Our [toolkit list of where to buy native plants and seeds](#) may be outdated or missing some nurseries. If you know of any nurseries that aren't on our list, or if you'd like to help us call the nurseries, please [email us](#).





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## **Volunteer Spotlight**

***Rick Phillips***



Wild Ones Front Range (WOFR) would not be the same without Rick Phillips' mostly behind the scenes help. A list of what he does is quite inadequate, as he is an "all-around handyman kind of guy." He is the web chair, or web master for the WOFR website; he is the zoom host, along with his wife, Vicki Saragoussi Phillips, for all our

Zoom programs; he has written numerous newsletter articles for us (mostly unprompted!); he provides the technical help for publishing our toolkit online; he has been a yard tour host for his spectacular landscape; he edits and posts videos for us, a very time consuming, unsung job; he propagates seeds and plants for WOFR Seed and Plant Swaps; and there is more. When we need help, we call Rick.

Much of what Rick does he approaches as the engineer that he is, with a scientific and very organized approach. And, when not doing Wild Ones work, he can be found putting his enviable energy into his very large yard, where he has experimented, along with Vicki, with a native oak grove, as well as a native prairie, and also an extensive vegetable garden. When not nurturing his own gardens, Rick volunteers at a Denver urban farm and aquaponics greenhouse that provides fresh produce to the local community. He likes being out in nature, scoping high for birds in flight, and examining the world's earthly landscapes, having been a geologist at one point. He also participates in "Reading Partners," a Denver Public School program where trained volunteers interact with and support young students with reading challenges, as well as reading extensively on his own. He enjoys cooking, and recently took up pottery. Thank you, Rick, for all you do for this chapter.

We don't know how you do it all, but are very grateful for your support as a very active volunteer for WOFR.

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## Help Our Chapter Thrive

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### Volunteer With Us

Help us educate more people about creating and promoting native plant Coloradoscapes by sharing your time and talents with us. We're a volunteer-run chapter, so every member willing to help makes a meaningful impact. Plus, it's fun to work with and learn from other people who are passionate about our mission!

Below is a list of our current openings for chapter members. Check out our [Volunteer Opportunities](#) page to see position descriptions for each.

- Blog Post Coordinator
- Propagation Chair
- Regional Coordinators for Denver
- Treasurer (Board Position)
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Website Content Coordinator
- Zoom Host

Please [email us](#) to learn more.

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### Become a Member, if You're Not One Already!

We are a membership-based and member-led chapter. Please show your support for helping more Front Range residents convert their outdoor spaces into native plant Coloradoscapes by becoming a member today. Household memberships start at just \$40, with Limited Income/Student memberships available for \$25.

**Join today!**

Additional benefits of becoming a Wild Ones Front Range member include:

- Discounts on and early notification of educational programs
- Invites to member-only local gatherings
- Access to our member-only Facebook group

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## Members' Corner

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### Meet our New Regional Coordinators for Northern Colorado

Karen Miller and Alora LaVoy are the new Regional Coordinators for Northern Colorado. They are excited to grow the community and collaboration between local members through garden crawls and other gatherings.

Karen felt guilty about watering her turf yard for 20 years before she finally did something about it. She learned about Wild Ones at the Fall 2022 Seed Swap, and the importance of native plants resonated with her. Karen couldn't be happier with her decision to join Wild Ones and looks forward to another year of awesome activities with wonderful people.



Karen participating in one of our propagation bump-up events.

Alora joined Wild Ones in February 2022 as a way to learn more about gardening with Colorado's native plants. Her interest had been sparked by Benjamin Vogt's "A New Garden Ethic" webinar, when she was looking for inspiration after a late spring snow storm the previous year pulled apart a cherry tree and left a void to fill in her backyard. Alora has been adding native plants to her garden ever since, one small area at a time.



Alora enjoying last year's garden crawl in Fort Collins (on the left is member Kevin Lyles, who helps us plan the NOCO Plant & Seed Swaps - thanks Kevin!)

### Meet our New Outreach Coordinator

Paula Mann of Fort Collins is our new Outreach



Coordinator. She will help us improve our outreach materials and recruit volunteers to represent the Wild Ones Front Range chapter at various events.

Having grown up in Colorado, Paula has been an advocate of reducing landscape water for over 30 years. She has followed Wild Ones for several years and became a member in March 2023. Each year, she adds more native plants to her tiny suburban lot and loves the reaction of neighbors to the beauty of the plants and the abundance of pollinators, other insects, and birds that are now visiting the neighborhood. Paula is excited to help share the vision and knowledge Wild Ones promotes.

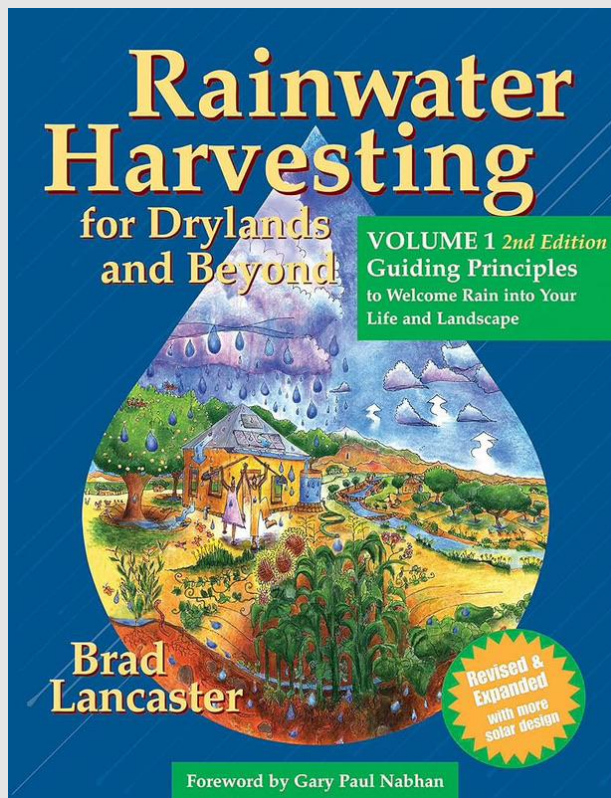


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## **Book Review**

### **Rainwater Harvesting for Drylands and Beyond by Brad Lancaster**

*Review by Pam Sherman*



Brad Lancaster lives in a city which gets 11 inches of rain a year. Tucson AZ is one water-stressed city in the desert, getting its city water from the Colorado River 300 miles away. He writes: “we’d typically have more free local water than we need if we’d consciously harvest it, rather than wastefully drain it away. And we don’t need any fancy equipment or large infrastructure to do so.”

Before reading this book review, watch Brad on [this video](#) (6:25) at his website; it’s the best introduction to his work. Then watch the first video on [this page](#), where he demonstrates why rainwater harvesting is a whole dimension change from setting out a few rainbarrels. They are a nice start, but not up to the task of capturing the rainfall and sinking it into the ground to re-wild the landscape. Then [go here](#) for the big picture of



where our rain goes and how water harvesting can help the watershed. Now you're set!

*Read the full review here!*

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## Upcoming Events

*Check out our website's [Events](#) section for registration links and full event details!*

**Louisville Library Seed Swap with Wild Ones Front Range**

Saturday, March 2

**NOCO Seed Sowing for NOCO Plant Swap Event**

Saturday, March 9

**Pikes Peak Region Propagation Party!**

Saturday, March 9

**Graph Paper Native Garden Planning**

Sunday, March 10

*Members Only*

**Annual Member Meeting**

Tuesday, March 12

*Members Only, Virtual*

**"Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants" with Robin Wall Kimmerer**

Tuesday, March 19

*Hosted by Wild Ones National*

**WOFR March Board Meeting**

Wednesday, March 20

*Members Only, Virtual*

**Woods Boss Brewing Seed Swap**

Saturday, March 23



*It was great to see so many of you at this year's Landscaping with Colorado Native Plants Conference!*

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



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