





Wishful thinking

January 2025

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Become a member today!

**Happy new year, everyone.
May it be full of joy, health and native plants for you!**

The WOFR Newsletter Staff

Your Landscape Actions Can Actually Save the Planet! (Or at least help, a lot)

By Kristine Johnson

Wild Ones' [mission statement](#) focuses on native plants for healthy ecosystems, and the [Front Range Chapter speaks](#) to landscaping for a climate-resilient future. Why is this important, and what can sound gardening techniques anchored on native plants provide beyond this?

Many people know that we are living in the midst of climate change, [defined as](#) “long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns” due to “human activities [that] have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas.” What they may not know is that we face multiple other global environmental threats. The Stockholm Resilience Centre summarizes these as a set of [planetary boundaries](#) inside of which Earth is “stable and resilient.” Beyond planting for biodiversity and gardening to limit greenhouse gas emissions and sequester carbon, we can plan and create landscapes that address these limits. Below you will find specific, actionable suggestions for addressing the major impacts.

Climate change. Emissions of greenhouse gases linked to gardening come in two main categories: embodied carbon (EC) of materials used, and direct emissions from gardening actions. EC entails the greenhouse gas emissions that happen as a result of creating and transporting materials. Some, such as concrete, steel, and glass, have very high associated impacts. Three ways around this are:

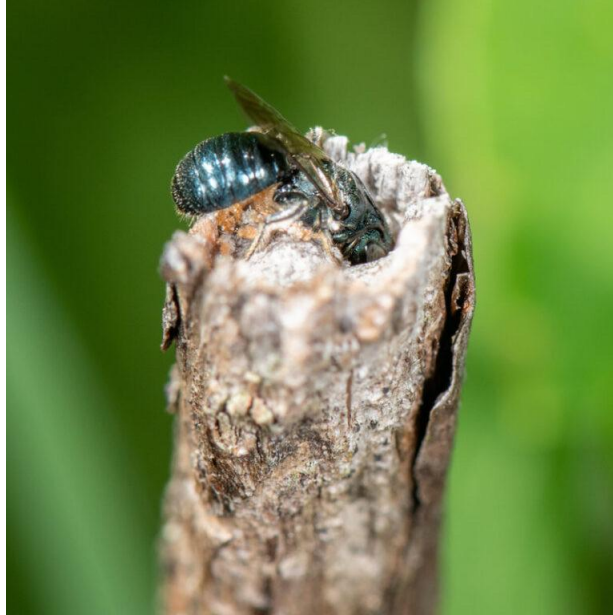


Find used flagstone and other hardscaping materials to reduce your native landscape’s carbon footprint. Image by Kristine Johnson.

- Avoid or limit new concrete and metal in your garden plan.
- Seek out used materials.
- Substitute lower EC materials, such as wood, bamboo, and products made from recycled rather than virgin sources.

Gardening which causes direct greenhouse gas emissions include tilling and landfilling organic materials such as weeds, stems, and leaves. By disturbing the soil as little as possible and avoiding tilling, organic carbon stays in the ground. Consider these practices instead:

- Avoid tilling or turning the soil.
- Compost yard waste or contribute your organic materials to curbside or community composting efforts, both drastically [reduces greenhouse gas emissions](#).
- Leave your fall leaves and stems in place to support wildlife. This results in zero carbon emissions, and [leads to more carbon sequestered in our soil](#).



Leaving native plant stems in the garden helps protect native bee habitat (read more in this WOFR article on [Spring Stem Cleanup](#)). Photo courtesy of www.pollinatorsnativeplants.com

Biosphere integrity. Biodiversity is the sheer variety of life on Earth in all its forms. We are in the midst of a massive planetary extinction event, [leaving us with fewer species and types of living things](#) to cope with major environmental disruptions. Wild Ones' core mission supports and promotes the establishment of native plant landscapes which support biodiversity. Enhance your landscapes biodiversity by:

- Continue to add new species of native plants to your garden.
- Select species to expand your blooms across more seasons.
- Add categories of native plants, such as shrubs, trees, grasses and succulents, if you don't have them.
- Seek out plants that you know support endangered pollinators or birds.
- Chip away at the existing lawn that isn't needed for walking or playing on.
- Remove noxious weeds (invasive non-native plants).
- For more details, check out any of [Doug Tallamy's](#) books and any [native plant/wildlife gardening certification program](#).)

Freshwater use. Coloradans know water demand is high and supply is increasingly short, with growing calls for conservation. Fortunately, landscapes comprised of native plants on the whole use less water than lawns do (check out CSU Extension and this [case study](#)) and provide vastly more [ecosystem services](#), such as cooling and cleaning the air and absorbing and cleaning precipitation runoff, than either lawns or a rock-dominated version of xeriscaping. To amplify your native plant landscape's water resiliency:

- Learn about harvesting your precipitation (also known as [rain gardening](#)) to lessen your use of supplemental water and reduce your runoff to the storm sewer.

Biogeochemical flows. Many gardeners know that nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) are major plant nutrients and ubiquitous components of [fertilizers](#). Many don't know, however, that on a global level, N and P are massively overapplied, leading to pollution of both freshwater and oceans. If you've heard about algae blooms, [eutrophication](#), or red tides in local lakes, the Gulf of Mexico, and/or coastal communities, know that they happen because of runoff of excess N and P. Our soils in Colorado are naturally low in N and P, so our native plants evolved to need very little of it; native plants just don't need fertilizer, so don't apply it. It doesn't hurt to apply a

little plant-based compost, which is naturally quite low in N and P and in forms that don't readily leach to runoff. In addition, skipping the fertilizer leads to sturdier, longer-lived plants. Take-away action:

- Our native plants just don't need fertilizer, so don't apply it!



Living mulch

Land system change. Obvious forms of changing landscapes include deforestation and urban sprawl, but don't forget mining. Many folks don't realize that landscaping [gravel gets mined](#) from [precious and limited riparian systems](#) (areas adjacent to freshwater, disproportionately impactful in supporting biodiversity and ecosystem function). When adding mulch to your landscape, consider:

- Seek out secondhand sources for rock gravel
- Consider a [living mulch](#) (interplanting with low growing native grasses or increasing your planting density)
- Use an appropriate amount of [fall leaves or arborist mulch](#) (mulch created within your community by private or city arborists; generally the lowest EC source of mulch, unbagged and therefore plastic free; superior in function for your plants and soil).

Novel entities. These are substances not naturally found in wild places: for gardeners, think plastics, pesticides, and PFAs. Frequently found to be carcinogens and [endocrine disruptors](#), they can be [lethal or harmful](#) to pollinating insects, amphibians, fish, and birds. They linger in the environment, accumulating but usually slow to break down. As native plant gardeners who support biodiversity, we should:

- Avoid using insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, rodenticides (all different categories of [PESTICIDES](#)) for our own safety as well as that of native pollinators and birds.
- Don't use landscape fabric, which is made from plastic, [doesn't control weeds in the long term](#), and limits water and air infiltration to soil.
- If you use [plastic in propagation](#), reuse it as much as possible because many forms of it are not recyclable.

Global problems can feel overwhelming, but the suggestions in this article really add up. Even better, most of these actions will save you money or time. We hope you feel empowered to make different choices for a healthier planet and a more resilient community.

Winter Watering

Let holidays remind you to do wintering watering

By Kristine Johnson

Many folks don't realize that winter is our dry season on the Front Range of Colorado. We haven't had a lot of snow so far this season, but even when we do, because snow takes up more space than rain and because it can linger on the ground, some people think that winter is wetter than it actually is. (This is not true for those at higher elevations in Colorado, and you know who you are!) Unusually high winter temperatures such as we experienced in December can also dry soils out quickly. Even our fairly normal cycling of temperatures from warm to cold and back again can be stressful for plants.

Trees, shrubs, and recently planted (2024) perennials can benefit from a drink when it's been a while since rain or snow. Holidays help me remember to water, because they occur about as frequently as we need to water (once a month in winter). During the week of a major holiday (Thanksgiving, New Year's Day, Presidents Day, choose your own!), reflect on the weather. Is there snow on the ground? How much precipitation have we gotten in the past month? Probably not enough. Check a weather app and choose the WARMEST day of the week or so (when the high will be over 40°F for at least a few hours). I go out during that warmest time of the warmest day and let the hose trickle. I set a timer for the size of the plant (checking with a five gallon bucket what that time means). I start with my baby trees and shrubs, and they may get only 5 slow gallons. I move on through established trees and shrubs, especially if it's been very dry, and they get longer periods of watering. I water recently planted perennials last. I make sure to finish while the temperature is still over 40°F and the sun is still up so no ice forms on the ground. For further explanation, check out [these guidelines](#) from CSU Extension. Be sure to disconnect and fully drain your hoses. Your garden will thank you!

Get Involved

Seeking Volunteer Coordinator

Are you a people person, who is interested in connecting individuals wanting to get involved with Wild Ones and native plants?

Wild Ones Front Range Chapter is looking for someone who can serve as the chapter's volunteer coordinator. This position will track members who volunteer for activities and jobs; promote volunteer opportunities; and identify better ways to connect with our members. We are a hands-on organization and want to cultivate community and purpose, giving people the opportunities to get their hands dirty, if so inclined, or help us get the word out on why landscaping with native plants is so important. Ideally, this person will be a self-starter who likes organizing and likes getting to know lots of like-minded people. And, you will not be alone – the WOFR board will be there to help get

you started!

If you think this is you, please [email us](#).



Chapter News

THANK YOU for a successful Colorado Gives Day campaign!

In 2024, your generous donations raised over **\$10,000** to help us empower more Front Range residents to transform their outdoor spaces into [Coloradoscapes](#) with native plants. Donations enable us to educate and empower people to take action to heal the Earth, right where we live.

Our chapter is 100% volunteer-run, with regions that span communities all across Colorado's Front Range and even into the mountains and Western Slope areas. Wild Ones Front Range Chapter greatly appreciates your generous donations during the Colorado Gives campaign, and all year long. [Click here to donate](#).

Announcing the 2025 Board of Directors!

Thanks to all of our members who voted on the 2025 Board of Directors slate. Here is the official list of the Board of Directors for 2025:

Officers

President - vacant
Vice President - Deb Lebow Aal
Treasurer - Kathleen Besser
Secretary - Kristin Laux

Members at Large

Peggy Hanson
Jonathan Sciarcon
Ayn Schmit
Vicki Saragoussi Phillips
Danna Liebert
Kristine Johnson

The Board of Directors met on December 15, 2024 to assess resources and strategize priorities for 2025. Our priorities include: growing and developing regional

independence to decentralize operations and create opportunities at local levels, continuing to build out the amazing resources in our online Toolkit, increasing advocacy efforts, and creating an organized program for volunteer engagement. Keep an eye out for updates on our progress in 2025!

Confusion About All the Wild Ones' Emails You Get?

No doubt you get a lot of emails from Wild Ones, and you may be confused as to who is sending you what. So, we will attempt to clarify this for you.

The National Office of Wild Ones sends you emails, and we appreciate all the information they send out. There are often zoom events from the National Office, maybe two or three events a year.

If you are a member of Wild Ones living in Colorado, then you are a member of the Wild Ones Front Range Chapter (WOFR). We send out emails under the Wild Ones Front Range Chapter banner.

We have the most members of all 93 Wild Ones chapters nationally (and 36 seedling chapters!), spanning the largest geographical area of any chapter, covering all of Colorado. And since we are so large and wanted to be able to service all our members with local events, we decided a few years back to divide our chapter into 6 different regions. So, you are now a member of one of WOFR's 6 regions. They are: Denver, Northern (mostly the Fort Collins area), Jefferson County, Boulder County, Pikes Peak (mostly the Colorado Springs area), and Douglas and Elbert Counties. Our newsletter goes out to all of you, and events are often Chapter-wide, but you are now getting event invitations just for your region as well.

Does that make some sense of your Wild Ones emails? I hope so. If you still have questions, please [email us](#). Thanks!

Upcoming Events

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



Pikes Peak Region Social & Events Planning
Saturday, January 11

Denver Regional Monthly Social Hour

Sunday, January 12
Members only

WOFR Board Meeting
Wednesday, January 15
Members only

Boulder Regional Winter Sowing
Sunday, January 26

We love hearing from you!
If you would like to comment on anything in this newsletter or write an article, please [email us](#) your comments or ideas.

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



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