WILD ONES®

Front Range

***"We empower Front Range residents to plant and promote native Coloradoscapes for a climate-resilient future"***

## Wild Ones Front Range Chapter's Mission

To further illuminate our mission: *"You can't run a supermarket on just bread, and you can't run an ecosystem on just lawn" (Sara Stein, author of Noah's Garden: Restoring the Ecology of Our Own Back Yards).*

The way we landscape our yards really matters to the ecosystem. We are here to help! 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. And, any photos you have of your native plant garden or insects or birds on your native plants, please send us!

*Winter Scenes - Photos by R. Phillips*

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## January/February 2026

**In this newsletter...**



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## Ecological Gardening Best Principles

By Deborah Lebow Aal

Wild Ones isn't only about native plants. Yes, plant choice is critical, but your overall gardening techniques and what you do before, during, and after the planting of these native plants can have as large an impact on your home ecosystem. So, here are our top ten tips for caring for the environment while gardening.

*Rainwater from your downspout can be directed to basins where the water will slowly sink into the soil. (Photo by Linda Hellow)*

**1. Plant the water first**. Slow, sink, and spread the water that comes from the sky; your highest quality water resource, which is free! It's best to think about this before you are planting, but if you already have your yard planted, think about how to get more water to your trees. The best resources we know of for how to plant water are Brad Lancaster's excellent books on rainwater harvesting. His website and YouTube channel also offer excellent information. Reducing paved areas as much as possible also reduces runoff. Water does not sink in, obviously, where you have paved surfaces. (See our latest blog article on rainwater harvesting here.)

*Garden detritus, including leaves and pine needles can be used as mulch in a native plant garden. (Photo by JamesDeMers on Pixabay.)*

**2. Build good soil**. Leave your garden detritus right where it is, as much as possible, where it can break down and return nutrients to the soil and support soil life. This is especially true of leaves from your trees! They make the best mulch, and underneath trees, break down to give back to the tree. No need to till your soil – that disrupts soil biology. So, if you do want to add compost to build your soil, top dress your plants, don't till it in. Our little friends in the soil will mix it in over time. As your soil changes, the plants that are best adapted to your garden will change–and that's ok.

*Take out your non-native turf and replace with native plants or native-grass lawns.*

**3.Take out non-native turf grass.** Take out as much as possible! It wastes valuable space – not ideal for many ecological purposes, and is a huge waste of water and other resources for the home gardener. Put in native turf, like buffalo grass, in places where you want turf, or invite nature back in with lots of native plants and native bunch grasses.

**4.Think beyond conventional notions of what's pretty**. When deciding which plant to plant, think about the purpose(s) the plant serves. Is it a larval host for a specific bee, moth, or butterfly? Do birds eat their seeds in the winter? Does it fix nitrogen in the soil? Can it be a nurse plant, protecting other more delicate plants? Your yard can be pretty and also serve the ecosystem. There are numerous resources to find out what a particular plant's superpowers are: National Wildlife Federation's plant finder, Audubon, The Xerces Society. For the biggest ecological bang for your buck, trees and shrubs are your go to. Not only can they, when planted in the right location, reduce your air conditioning needs, but they support a multitude of species, many more than your typical forb. See our article on multi-stemmed trees and shrubs.

*Buying bagged mulch creates plastic waste. Buy in bulk or use Chip Drop instead.*

**5. Reduce your inputs, and particularly, your use of plastic**. If you are buying plastic bags full of mulch and "topsoil," you are paying for the transportation as well as dealing with the issue of plastic that has to be discarded somewhere. Better to try and repurpose your own soil, and make your own mulch. Yes, make your own mulch, as in using your leaves and garden detritus, minus weed seeds and aggressive plants, as mulch. Use what you already have on hand first. And if you don't have enough, think about getting mulch delivered in bulk, as Chip Drop. And remember, native plants generally do not need any additives –no fertilizers, especially synthetic. You can, and probably should, as said

above, top-dress with your homemade compost. If you live in an urban environment, your soil has probably been abused and compacted. Compaction is the true enemy of native plants, and top-dressing with your homemade compost is your long term best bet to address this. Soil life will mix it in over time, making your soil much healthier. (And note – we are not talking about vegetable gardening. That's a very different "animal.")

**6. Avoid pesticides**. This could have gone into "reduce your inputs," but it is important enough to have its own section. The science is in – pesticides, especially neonicotinoid insecticides, have done enormous damage to insect, bird, and mammal populations. And herbicides to kill weeds – avoid if at all possible. We really don't know the extent of the damage they are causing. This is my opinion: There is no such thing as an herbicide that kills only the weed you want gone. Consider that in some parts of Canada, pesticides are not allowed for use on home ornamental landscapes. In many or most cases, there are other ways to deal with weeds and insects on the home landscape scale.

**7. Reduce your outputs.** In other words, practice zero waste gardening. Gardening waste can almost always be composted or used in some way in your landscape. If you can't compost on site, your city may have a program. I have a leaf collection system in my back yard. I use every last one. It's not complicated and doesn't take up much room. Making leaf mold is a really easy way to compost. Find a hidden spot or an artful way to make a habitat brush pile. Save your plant containers to be reused in Wild Ones plant swaps. Consider repurposing containers which come through your household one last time to grow a plant to give away.

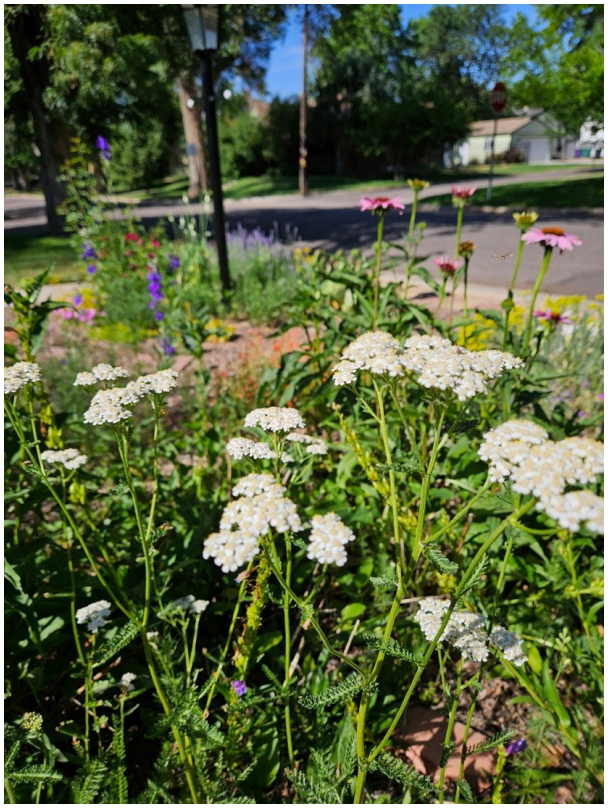
*The native plant Rudbeckia hirta is an annual that readily reseeds and looks good in a formal garden or container. (Photo by Linda Hellow)*

**8. Re-think your use of annuals**. Annual bedding plants (plants that only live one season/year) flower for a longer time during the gardening season than most perennials, but they can require more inputs than perennials, too. Many non-native annuals take quite a bit of water and fertilizer to keep looking their best, especially if (as typical) they are grown in containers. They are also a lot more work and expense over time, requiring planting every year. Now, this is not to say you should not have your vegetable garden. We do need to feed ourselves. We're talking about your non-native petunias and begonias. Choose drought-tolerant, native, re-seeding annuals with ecological benefits. Annuals that re-seed will help fill gaps to reduce weed pressure in the garden beds and don't require production in a greenhouse each year. Annual native Erigeron (cloud daisies) are fabulous garden additions. Check out our plant lists, such as those in our article on native plant substitutions to use in your garden.

**9. Use no plastic!** Yes, I am repeating this point, but it bears repeating. Landscape fabric is a big no-no. It is an unsustainable waste of resources, leaking microplastics into the environment and disrupting natural soil cycles. And artificial turf – yikes! I can't think of anything less sustainable than that. We have two articles on how detrimental it is for the environment and your health. And those plastic pots your beautiful native plants came in – reuse them. Better yet, start your native plants from seed at home. Check out our resources on propagating native plants.

**10. Avoid gas-powered machinery**. In the U.S., we used 3 billion gallons of gas* for our mowers and leaf blowers, etc. And that's an old number! But, if taking out as much lawn as possible, you can go with a push mower! And leaf blowers…yikes. Leave the leaves. Note that if you are gardening to bring in a diversity of insects, leaf blowers kill insects!

Did I say 10 tips? Well, we have two bonus tips!



*For the most abundant beauty and function, plant a variety of trees, shrubs and forbs. And plant in your front yard so your neighbors can ask about your garden and you can share these helpful tips! (Photo by Idelle Fisher)*

**11. Variety is the key.** In the words of Sara Stein, author of Noah's Garden, my favorite book explaining why you should be gardening with the environment, instead of fighting it, "Ecology isn't rocket science; It's way more complicated!" The best way to cover your bases is to plant lots of different species of plants. Your soil will be healthier, and you will be supporting many more insects by doing that.

**12. Start with your front yard.** What, you say? How is this a sustainable gardening tip? Well, we humans are part of the ecosystem too. Gardening in your front yard can connect you to your neighbors, who will see what you are doing, and maybe start conversations about why you are doing this. Everything takes twice as long as it should, but it's worth it!

And, stay curious! The more your eyes are open to the living world around you, the more you will learn. I guarantee you will always be learning more!

*Deborah Lebow Aal is president of the Wild Ones Front Range Chapter, a former U.S. EPA employee, and very curious native plant gardener.*

*This number is from an Environment Texas article November 17, 2021.

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## Connecting Native Plant Gardening and Rain Gardening

By Kristine Johnson

I've written a series of articles for Wild Ones Front Range on precipitation harvesting, and I've recently interviewed Brad Lancaster, Jace Lankow and Luis Salgado–all water harvesting practitioners in Tucson, Arizona–for insights into the connections between native plant gardening and rain gardening. Look for that article in the national Wild Ones Journal in March. Also see previous articles: the "Why" of Rainwater Harvesting, Multi-Stem Trees, Thinking About Next Steps. Theodore Johnson-Mencimer, a co-conspirator of mine, will be leading a Wild Ones Front Range webinar on precipitation gardening in February. My focus in this current piece is how we can move from theory to action and then broaden and multiply the impact of those actions. My teachers have helped me to see that just as with native plant gardening, in rain gardening, we start with learning, move on to implementing what we've learned, cycle through learning from our successes and failures, and finally, experience the broadest impacts when we build community around our gardening.

**Just Do It!**

For me, rain gardening started with one downspout and one "basin": One source of water and one good place to collect that water. It took some tinkering. For example, do I really want the full force of a heavy rain coming down my downspout to emerge directly on a red twig dogwood, or does the water need a "splash pad" of a few bricks to spread its energy? If I extend the downspout from my carport across a pathway so that it reaches the giant spruce in my side yard, will I remember to put it back down if I lift it to move a wheelbarrow through that part of the yard? Or do I need to come up with a more permanent solution? Was I too optimistic in sizing a basin such that I need to reshape it or include more xeric plants?

*Cornus sericea (Red Twig Dogwood) is an example of a shrub with moderate water needs that could thrive next to a basin in an otherwise dry landscape. (Photo from USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database)*

I was hesitant to start some of my projects, because I couldn't predict if they would function perfectly ahead of time. A lightbulb went off: The same is true for pretty much all parts of what we do as habitat gardeners. I can do my best and still have plants die on me. I can try my hardest with site prep and still be removing plugs of Kentucky bluegrass which didn't die from solarization. With all parts of habitat gardening, at some point, we just need to take a leap. In the immortal words of Yoda, "Do or do not, there is no try." Let go of your imperfections and just get out there.

*Just like how we share our collective knowledge on native plants, we can pool our experiences with rain harvesting on the Front Range through Wild Ones events.*

I share this, because many people attended the workshop with Brad Lancaster in Boulder during the summer of 2023, which launched this journey for me. But how many of them built a basin? I'm pretty sure the number is low. The work I did in my yard was essentially free; it took some measuring and calculating and moving soil. But how many people act on their inspirations? What did it take for *you* to start planting native plants? What would it take for *you* to start rain gardening?

Just as we don't want there to be just one pollinator garden along the Front Range or one gardener leaving her leaves and stems and seedheads for native insects and birds, we want *many* rain gardeners. The impact multiplies with each additional downspout diverted to native plantings, to each yard converted to rain gardens, to each street and neighborhood soaking as much of their precipitation into their yards rather than losing it as runoff. We need to hold each other's hands in this. Just as we give each other seeds from our yards and plants that we grew, we need to help each other in seeing our landscape in new ways, in understanding our microtopography, and yes, in picking up our shovels to make basins for runoff.

In that spirit, we plan to offer an inaugural "build your own basin" workshop this summer in the Boulder County region. I have been part of a similar workshop with Tucson water harvesting practitioners, and I am ready to leap off the page (or screen) and start working with my Wild Ones Front Range community to get their hands dirty. If you are interested in hosting such a workshop and you are in my region (Boulder), please email Front Range Wild Ones to contact me. In addition, I intend to open my yard up to share successes and mishaps to help demystify the process. Stay tuned!

**A Vision for Colorado**

Colorado has a few promising next steps in precipitation harvesting. We must both become more rigorous and informed in our rain gardening practices (the calculations aren't that complex!) and more consistent (they should be regular features of every landscape). We are losing millions upon millions of gallons of water in runoff which paradoxically exacerbates both drought and flooding.

The City of Tucson offers several incentives for residents to adopt rain gardening, including their Storm to Shade Program to encourage redirecting storm runoff to trees. Additionally, there are rebates for curb cuts to harvest stormwater from the street. The Watershed Management Group provides residential, business and neighborhood workshops and services on harvesting rainwater from downspouts or as greywater. We need to normalize and incentivize these practices and we need to share our learning, just as we do with native plant gardening.

*Is Sorghastrum nutans (Indiangrass) a tall-grass prairie plant that would thrive in a landscape fed with rainwater harvesting techniques? Let's find out! (Photo Credit: PrairieNursery.com)*

We're not where Arizona is in terms of understanding where to put native plants in rain gardens. In Brad's books and on his website, there are great plant lists, primarily native, categorized based on their locations within a rain harvesting landscape: the basin bottom (wettest), the basin top (driest), or in between. The resource commonly used in the Rocky Mountain region, the Rain and Forest Garden Plant Matrix, which is cited on our Wild Ones Front Range webpage, is honestly due for a tuneup. It has a high concentration of non-native plants, primarily sourced from permaculture (45 of 162 plant species are native). To address this issue, we must improve our understanding of both the water requirements of our native plants and their ethnobotanical uses, while ensuring ethical and respectful consideration of indigenous knowledge; we need to create a native plant rain garden plant list, along with any ethnobotanical uses or concerns. I wrote the multi-stem trees and shrubs article last year because many of the species in that article are fantastic habitat plants but have higher water needs; they can be part of our landscapes if we include them in rain gardens, and I would like to include them in this new list. One of our Boulder County members had a big aha-moment this fall in my yard; rain gardening allows me to grow some plants which need more moisture. While it's great that Front Range communities are trying to take a step back from thirsty Kentucky blue grass and other non-native, non-functional ornamental plants, we all know that doesn't mean we're consigned to dry landscapes of rock and cacti. What many people fail to recognize, however, is that there *is* more water out there for us to use, but we're shedding it as quickly as we can into our gutters and storm sewers.

**Parting Inspiration**

Tucson receives an average of 11 inches of precipitation annually and experiences relatively high temperatures throughout the year. In contrast, Boulder, where I live, receives nearly 20 inches of rainfall annually, and our temperatures are significantly lower. We have comparatively so much abundance and ease! Rain gardening should be so easy and so fruitful! In essence, we should find inspiration in Tucson, a city with substantially less water and a higher potential evapotranspiration (water requirement) compared to all of the Front Range. My training and my gardening experiences have inspired me to share.

What I have seen done in the desert is inspiring, and I firmly believe that there's no reason we can't all do it here.

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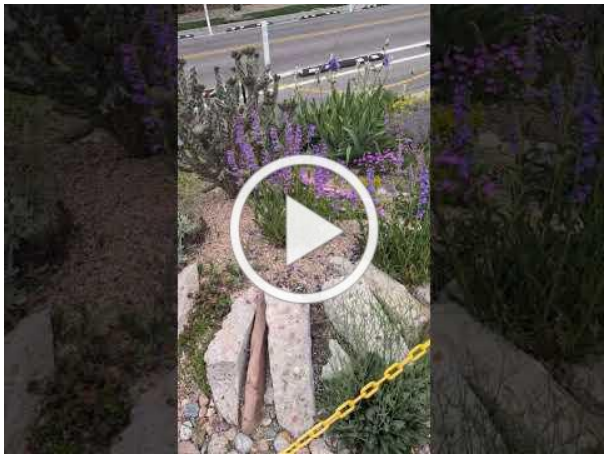
## WOFR Chapter Demo Garden: Greenverein!

By Christine Gust

Five years ago, a group of volunteers from Denver Turnverein, the Wild Ones Front Range Chapter, and Uptown on the Hill spent the year converting a strip of hot asphalt into a low water garden prioritizing native plants. We made a video about the project.

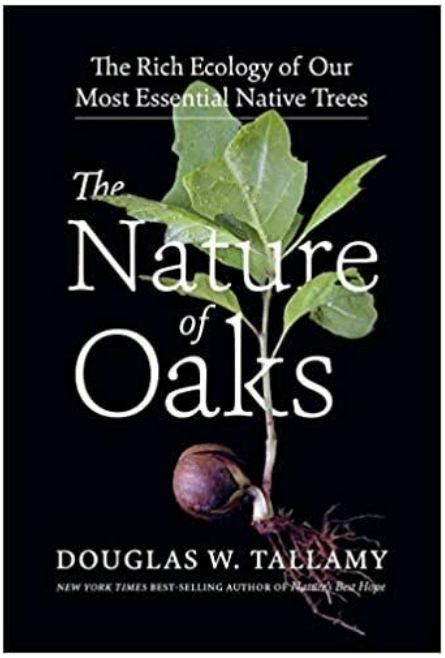

Since then, Julie Nordstrom, Judy Hopper, and a few neighbors have been taking care of the garden, so I think of them as fairy garden godmothers.



Doesn't it look amazing??

This strip has no irrigation system, and only gets occasional supplemental water when someone can visit and use a hose. One of the "secrets" here to making this work is the swales that collect water when it rains or snows. The swales also serve as narrow pathways to access plants without compacting the soil. We repurposed chunks of concrete called "urbanite" to stabilize the berms and create a check dam to slow the flow of water in large rain events. Many WIld Ones Front Range chapter plant swap plants are part of this garden. Passersby rave about plants like the spreading Desert four o-clocks (*Mirabilis multiflor*a), the bright Desert Beardtongues (*Penstemon pseudospectabilis*), the many thriving cacti (e.g. *Opuntia sp*.) and more. The cacti serve a purpose of keeping people from tracking through the garden. Julie and Judy say it's very tricky pruning around the cacti, so they try to keep other plants in check to minimize the risk of getting spiked by cactus spines. You can visit the garden at 16th and Clarkson, anytime!

## Book Review




*"The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn"*
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Review by Karen Vanderwall

Doug Tallamy's book, *The Nature of Oaks*, his homage to oaks (genus *Quercus*), is a pleasure to read from cover to cover. Although I had known of the book, now living and gardening in an area where there are few oaks, I assumed the book would not be very relevant to me. I was happily very wrong as it is so much more than a book about oaks. The message is that, yes, oaks are the rock stars of the vegetative world in North America, but the bigger message is how native species are intricately interwoven with other species that in turn support other species – all playing their part in the greater ecosystem.

The author is a professor of entomology and wildlife ecology, and conservationist. He is a hero to the native plant crowd for his promotion of using native plants in home gardens and landscapes to provide habitat for native species. These smaller oases provide a bridge to larger ecosystems like parks. In the beginning of the book, he laments how people in our society today spend so much time indoors on electronics, that our educational system lacks in teaching natural history, and that even highly educated and successful people (including scientists) don't know what an oak leaf looks like. It is for those reasons that he wanted to write the book.

Tallamy begins the book in July 2000 when he moves into a new home on 10 acres and plants his first white oak acorn. He does suggest this is the best way to plant an oak – via acorns. The story continues from there as he reflects and describes what he has observed on his property and specifically that original oak. Each chapter is a month in the year of his observations and reflections of the oak. As of the time he writes the book the original oak is 18 years old and 45 feet tall.

Each chapter is chock full of interesting stories. There are many about insects such as the relationship of the acorn weevil and *Temnothorax* ants; the oak tree hoppers, the hairstreaks, slugs, parasitoid wasps, and lace bugs. He provides fascinating examples of insect mimicry of which he has included some wonderful photos.

There are examples of birds such as the blue jay whose physical features reflect it having evolved with the oak. Other chapters describe the interesting critters in the leaf litter, of which he names 20 plus insect groups that depend on oaks. Still others involve the oaks' root systems and their importance in soil formation, cool discussions of unique processes

such as marcescence, scientific theories about events such as masting years, and oaks in our environment. There are also interesting, cited research findings throughout, such as how the reduction of habitat is directly related to big reductions of insect and bird populations.

Although native plants are important in the role they play in the ecosystem, all native plants are not created equal. Some oaks, for example, are host to up to 500 species of caterpillars compared to the Yellowwoods which host none at all. So, oaks are definitely keystone species and then some.

Part of what makes the book so good is that it was written from a personal and scientific perspective, by an educator and also someone who is fascinated and passionate about nature. I finished the book with even more determination to promote native plants, motivated to replace non-native with native plants in my own yard and planting as many oaks as possible!

*Karen Vanderwall is a Wild Ones member living in Fort Collins, Colorado, a biologist formerly working in the areas of resource conservation and habitat restoration and enjoys learning about nature through native plant gardening.*

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## Plant Stories

### Gambel Oak (*Quercis gambelii, Nutt.*)

By Richard Phillips

*Gambel Oak Groves at Roxborough State Park. Photo source unknown.*

The Gambel Oak (also known as Gambel's Oak) was described and named by the famous English/American naturalist Thomas Nuttall in 1848. He named the specimen after its collector, William Gambel, who found it in 1840 near Santa Fe, NM when he was only 19 years old, during a pioneering trip to the American Southwest. Gambel was a protégé of Nuttall, who trained the younger man in biology, geology and ornithology. Sadly, Gambel died at the young age of 27 years during a trip to California. He had gotten gold fever, left his new bride in the East, and died of typhoid in a miner's camp. To further confuse you about how to spell the tree's name, William's family surname is actually Gamble, but at some point William began spelling it as Gambel.

Gambel Oak is known by several common names including Rocky Mountain White Oak, Utah White Oak and most commonly as the Scrub Oak. It is one of three oaks native to Colorado and is the most common one. It typically grows in thickets, rarely exceeding 20' in height, but specimens as tall as 50' have been recorded. It has deeply lobed, deciduous leaves. It can grow in just about any type of soil, from rocky to loamy. It has low water needs and grows slowly.

For some reason, the tree has a large range in leaf size. The large leaf in the photo is from a tree in my yard, while the small leaf, which is more typical of the wild trees, came from a neighbor's tree. The large leaf is 7" long and the small ones are about 2.5".

*Leaf size variation. Photo by R. Phillips*

In Colorado, it typically grows in canyons and dry slopes from about 4,000 to 9,000 feet in elevation; above the pinyon/juniper forests and below the aspen/ponderosa forests. For some reason on the Front Range, Denver is about the northern limit of its natural range, whereas in western Colorado, it can be found all the way to the Wyoming border.

It produces small acorns, which serve as food for bears, turkeys, squirrels and other wildlife. Indigenous people are known to have collected and eaten the acorns for millennia. They would shell them and grind them to be used as flour. Deer and elk browse the leaves. Domestic cattle can ingest small amounts of the leaves, but eating large quantities can actually kill them.

Along the Front Range, large thickets of Gambel Oak can be viewed along the trails and roads at Roxborough State Park, Waterton Canyon and Garden of the Gods. In the wild, the tree primarily spreads through underground suckers rather than growing from seeds. Research has shown that the trees in a grove are all monoclonal (they have the same DNA), similar to large aspen forests.

The tree can be propagated from the acorns collected in the wild. Be sure to collect ones without holes from insects. The acorns do not require cold stratification and, reportedly, will start to grow in the Fall as soon as they are planted. The seeds should be planted about 1" deep.

I collect acorns every year and have tried numerous ways to germinate them but have had very poor results. WOFR Board Member Kristine Johnson says she has about a 90% germination rate with her method. She recommends planting them indoors, immediately after collecting, if possible. If you have to wait, store them in a plastic bag in a refrigerator. The key is to not let them dry out or freeze.

Why does Wild Ones really like Gambel Oaks? It's because they are insect magnets extraordinaire!! The National Wildlife Federation native plant finder website credits the tree as host to a whopping 221 species of caterpillar-producing insects! Few plants in Colorado

come close to this number and most of those are also trees or shrubs. This oak is also the only host to the Colorado state insect, the lovely Colorado Hairstreak butterfly. The Hairstreak feeds solely on the oak and also lays eggs on it.

*Colorado Hairstreak Butterfly,*
*Photo by Glenn Walbek, Colorado Front Range Butterflies*

Consider adding some Gambel Oaks to your yard. You can grow your own, get them at WOFR Chapter plant swaps, or buy then at several commercial nurseries if you have access to them. They are hardy and easy to grow, and can be planted in a corner of your lot or anywhere along a fence row. It's a great way to support insect and bird life.

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## In Memoriam

### Tony Koski, Phd

Tony Koski, professor of turf science at CSU, passed away last summer after a lengthy battle with cancer. He is best known to the Wild Ones community as the crazy turf guy who taught how to convert our bluegrass lawns to native grasses using his scientific knowledge. He was recorded in several webinars for such entities as the Colorado Native Plant Society and Colorado Springs Utilities explaining the process from plant selection, site preparation, seeding, germination and cultivation. He knew how to make it work for the homeowner or large landscaper. He also produced several documents for the Colorado Extension Service covering similar topics. He will be missed.

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## Member Spotlight

### Tiny Love Story

By Judith Moran

The following is a "Tiny Love Story" submitted to the New York Times about Judith Moran's love for native grasses. Tiny Love Stories are love stories of no more than 100 words that readers submit to the New York Times. Judith is a member of Wild Ones Front Range Chapter.

*A lifelong gardener, I've had awe for many plants, but none as much as when I sowed blue grama grass in my backyard.*

*Once this grass covered much of the Great Plains, where I live, and was a staple food of the bison. Easy to grow, it belongs to this place.*

*Having deep roots, blue grama sequesters carbon, does well without irrigation and regrows after wildfire. It is a larval host for Skipper butterflies. Songbirds eat the seeds.*

*Some evenings I lie in the grass, grateful, and wonder if one day, this blue grama just might feed the bison again.*

If you would like to submit a tiny love story about Colorado native plants to us, we will print it! Send to frontrangewildones@gmail.com.

## Chapter News

Our next Board Meetings are on January 21 and February 18, from 6-8 pm. If you have any interest in joining our board, consider attending our meeting this month to see how we operate. **Email us** to get an invitation.

## Do You Have a Yard You'd Like To Share?

In the spring and summer, each of our Wild Ones Front Range Regions will have "Garden Crawls." This is a way for beginner and advanced native plant gardeners to exchange ideas, see how others are gardening, and get to know each other better. It's called a garden crawl, and not a garden tour or yard tour, because we are not expecting perfectly manicured yards. Your yard does not have to be picture perfect. It can be a project in process, and you can ask for ideas for your problem spots. So, if you'd like either to show off your perfect yard (does anyone have a perfect yard?), or have experts come see what you have done, for advice, or for fun, please send us **an email**. Include which region you are in and your regional coordinator will contact you. Thanks!

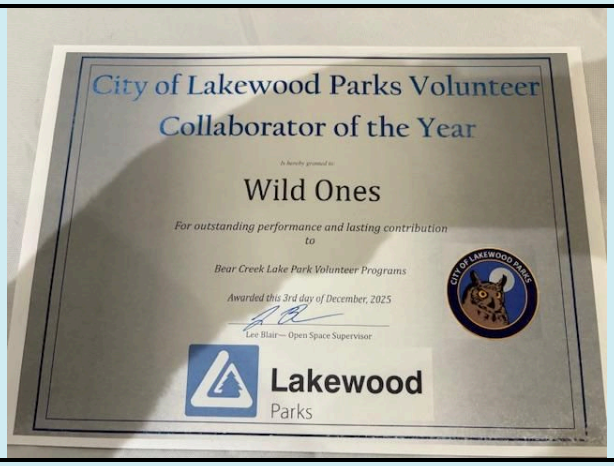
## Harlequin's Gardens is Hiring

Love Plants and People? Harlequin's Gardens, native plants specialists in Boulder, has a place for you! We have an opening for a **Retail Store & Office Lead,**
**Start date: February 2026.** This position is responsible for the successful operation of the nursery's retail store and office. This includes customer service, retail product ordering, product display, inventory, sales tracking, and coordinating classes and our annual Holiday Market. More info here: https://harlequinsgardens.com/about/careers/

## Wild Ones Front Range Chapter Receives an Award!

On December 3 2025, the City of Lakewood gave the Wild Ones Front Range Chapter the ***Collaborator of the Year*** award. On the only snowy, cold night we've had so far this winter, Laurel Starr, Deb Lebow Aal, and a few other hardy Wild Ones volunteers, ventured out to receive the award. The Jeffco region has been partnering with the City of Lakewood, to gather seeds, clean seeds, partner on the plant swap the region held in June, and more. Thanks to all our Jeffco volunteers who've spent time making this

partnership work. And, thanks to the City of Lakewood for being a more than willing partner.

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## Seed Swap Summaries

**Pikes Peak Region Native Plant Seed Share**
Our Pikes Peak region doubled their attendance from last year! Seventy-six attendees of all ages had the added challenge of getting to our venue due to the Veterans Day Parade happening at the same time. The Pikes Peak Region loves their native plant seeds! There was a wide selection of seeds, including grasses and shrubs as well as many forbs native to the wide range of altitudes of El Paso County. We were surprised and honored to see Penn Parmenter (purveyor of Miss Penn's Mountain Seeds out of Westcliff, CO) visit us. She was so impressed with the event that she offered to donate seeds for next year. Our volunteers are amazing! They answered questions, guided people to appropriate seeds for their needs, in addition to setting up and tearing down. We would also like to thank Grace & St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, the Manitou Seed Library, the Colorado Pollinator Network, the El Paso County Master Gardeners, and the Aiken Audubon Society who donated their time and energy to support our event. Sharing seeds and information about native plants was a joy for everyone there.

**Denver Metro + Jeffco Regions Seed Swap**
The Denver Metro and Jeffco Regions combined seeds, volunteers, and other resources to host the 2025 seed swap for members in a beautiful central Denver location. Volunteers from both regions dedicated nearly 1,000 hours to the event: collecting seeds from several locations, including Bluff Lake Nature Center and Aurora Reservoir and many members' own yards; cleaning all those seeds and preparing them for the swap; and managing the logistics on the day itself. The swap event itself offered about 200 different seed species and drew 109 attendees. Visitors enjoyed the seed shopping and interacted with volunteers at tables we provided to assist with information and education about the seeds for successful propagation.

**Boulder County**
Seed Swaps are yet to come! We are looking forward to a seed swap in Boulder at the Meadows Branch Library, Sunday, January 4th from 1-3 pm. Please be sure to register to save time in entering, ensure that you receive the seed list in advance, and get a printed name tag! We still have room for more volunteers. Find it all here,

In addition, we will be at the Louisville Public Library Saturday, February 7th, from 2-4 pm. This smaller, more relaxed seed swap will be in partnership with Louisville's Bee City USA squad and the library. Volunteer link will be added soon. More info here.

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## Announcing: Registration is open for the 11th annual Landscaping with Colorado Native Plants Conference

Register here.

February 28th, 2026, at CSU Spur in Denver, Colorado.

This year, we also have a Regional Satellite location in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Why two locations? Traveling in Colorado in winter can be challenging and we want to make the conference accessible and affordable to more people without sacrificing the in-person collaboration, discussion, and camaraderie that is built through attending this event with a group of like-minded native plant enthusiasts. Next year, we hope to have a regional location on the western slope as well. If you want to see the speakers in-person, attend at the main hub in Denver. If you are in southern Colorado, want to save on conference registration and travel, and you don't mind viewing a livestream of the event, attend in Colorado Springs.

**What is included at each location?**
Main Hub Denver, Colorado ($90): View the speakers live and in-person, catered lunch included, printed informational resources, access to conference recordings, network with sponsors and participants
Regional Satellite, Colorado Springs, Colorado ($45): View the conference live via streaming, lunch not included (food trucks or bring your own), printed informational resources, access to conference recordings, network with participants
Conference Recording Only ($30): Receive link to recordings about a week after the conference

If you are interested in volunteering at the conference in Denver or Colorado Springs, please connect with us using this volunteer interest form.

If you are part of a group or organization conducting native plant work or research consider submitting a proposal for our poster session.

We are very excited to host our keynote speaker, Dr. Rosalyn LaPier, whose keynote "The Land is Not Wild," will focus on how indigenous peoples cultivated the landscape for abundance long before colonization.

Bio: Rosalyn is an award-winning Indigenous writer, environmental historian, and ethnobotanist. They work within Indigenous communities to revitalize traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and to strengthen public policy for Indigenous languages. They are the author of two books including *Invisible Reality: Storytellers, Storytakers* and the *Supernatural World of the Blackfeet*, produced two Blackfeet language lexicons, and written dozens of articles and commentaries. Rosalyn is an enrolled member of the Blackfeet Tribe of Montana and Red River Métis.

If you have questions about the conference, please reach out to Allisa Zurbuchen (allisa.zurbuchen@colostate.edu) or Deryn Davidson (deryn.davidson@colostate.edu).

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## Call for More Volunteers

Our Wild Ones Chapter is growing so fast, our small volunteer board can’t keep up! With 786 members, we are by far the largest of the 98 chapters across the nation, and while we love having this explosive growth, we need more help and active engagement from more of our members. Here are a few areas we want to highlight:

**Seed Swap Lead**: We need someone to take the lead for the seed swaps in the fall. Each of our regions will likely hold its own swap. We need someone to serve as the coordinator for the swap activities, from designing the flyers to assisting the regions and managing distribution of the seed inventories and ensuring that the seeds distributed by Wild Ones are accurately identified. You’ll gain expertise in accurately identifying native plant seeds and collecting and preparing them for the swap, and meet like-minded wonderful people! Training will be provided.

**Pikes Peak Regional Co-Coordinator:** As you probably know, the Front Range Chapter of Wild Ones has six regions. One of our six is the Pikes Peak Region, which includes Colorado Springs and neighboring towns. The Pikes Peak Region is looking for an enthusiastic and energetic Regional Co-coordinator, starting in January. Our outgoing Co-Coordinator, Sue Wright, and existing Co-Coordinator, Louise Conner, will help with the transition. The Front Range Chapter is organized by geography to increase local member engagement and connection. Each region hosts at least 2 member gatherings each year, with at least one of these being a Member Garden Crawl, a plant swap and/or a seed swap.

Responsibilities include:

- Collaborating with Co-coordinator Louise Conner.
- Organizing meetings and planning committees.
- Delegating event responsibilities.
- Sending out email information to Pikes Peak Region members.
- Coordinating and documenting event happenings in the Pikes Peak Region for the Wild Ones Front Range Chapter.
- Attending monthly chapter board meetings (via Zoom).

This is a fun and rewarding volunteer position and a great way to connect with the Pikes Peak native plant community.

To apply for any of the positions please contact **frontrangewildones@gmail.com**.

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## Upcoming Events

*Check out our website's **Events** Page, which is constantly being updated, for registration links and full event details!*

**Boulder County Regional Seed Swap**
**January 4**

**Boulder County Region 2026 Planning Session**
**Boulder County Region 2026 Planning Sesh**
**January 10**

**Online Workshop: Native Plant Propagation with Jan Midgley #1**
**January 11**

**Webinar - "Native Plant Seeds: Collection, Preparation, & Germination" with Stephen Hornbeck**
**January 14**

**Pikes Peak Region: 2026 Planning Meeting**
**January 17**

**WOFR Board Meeting**
**January 21**

**Douglas/Elbert Cos Winter Sowing Workshop**
**Boulder County Region Winter Sowing**
**January 25**

**Pikes Peak Region: Starting Native Plants from Seed**
**January 29**

**Boulder County Region Winter Sowing**
**January 31**

**In person talk, Firestone: Planning and Seeding a Pollinator Garden**
**Boulder County Seed Swap at the Louisville Public Library**
**February 7**

**Online Workshop: Native Plant Propagation with Jan Midgley #2**
**February 8**

**Webinar - "Harvesting Rainwater for Your Native Plant Landscape" with Theodore Mencimer**
**February 11**

**WOFR Board Meeting**
**February 18**

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## Zero-Cost Donation!

There's a simple way you can contribute financially to WOFR, without spending any money! *A free donation!* Link WOFR (Wild Ones Front Range Chapter) with your King Soopers Card. Their Community Rewards Program will then make a contribution to WOFR at the end of the year, based on the total number of purchases made by the people who have linked their card to our organization. ***Do it today!***

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## Pollinator License Plate


You can show your true colors on your car as you drive around. The Protect Our Pollinators license plate was created by our sister organization, PPAN (People and Pollinators Action Network). The image on the plate is a Hunt's Bumblebee on a Blanket Flower, both Colorado natives species. For a one-time contribution to PPAN, you can support pollinators and get others interested as well. For more information, visit their website **PPAN License Plate**.

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**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.

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