The Kentucky Native Plant Society

NEWSLETTER: Vol. 3, No. 4, December 1988. Editor: Julian Campbell

THE THIRD YEAR OF THE KNPS by Ron Jones

The Kentucky Native Plant Society has now completed nearly three years of existence. In the first year our membership list rose to 350; it fell to about 300 in the second year and now is about 250. I hope that this slow drop in membership is not a continuing trend. I know that there are many members that have been very supportive of the KNPS who have just not sent in their dues for 1988; hopefully this is due only to forgetfulness. It appears however that we need to make a major effort to increase memberships. Please spread the word about our society, and I can send you extra membership forms; just let me know.

Our need for additional funds will become especially crucial in the next few years because of the increase in cost for publication of the newsletter. For the first two years, the newsletter was published by the EKU Printing Office at only about $70 an issue. They can no longer print our newsletter, and I have had to go to an off-campus printer, and the best price that I could find was about $200 an issue. Thus our printing costs are going to rapidly expand over the next few years. I would like to avoid raising the dues, but we may be forced to if our memberships don't increase to a sufficient level. We should also explore other means of raising funds. For example, our publication of the booklet The Vegetation and Flora of Kentucky has been a great success. It cost about $250 to print the booklet; we have made about $500 from the sales, netting $250. We also made a good profit from sales of the KNPS T-shirts. Other native plant societies have plant sales or raffles to raise additional revenues. One way to do this is for members to bring plants to donate to the raffle, which could be held at our annual spring and fall meetings. If there are those that would like to organize these or other kinds of fund-raising activities, please let me know. Pressure to conduct these kinds of activities would be alleviated if we could just increase our membership list to a higher level; I feel that we should have at least 400, and perhaps 500 members in the KNPS.

Our field trips have gone very well in our third year. We have arranged field trips to the following sites in 1988: Jessamine Gorge (Jessamine County), Central Kentucky Wildlife Refuge (Boyle County), Perdue-Davidson Orchid Site (Lee County), Clack Mountain (Rowan County), Cumberland River (McCreary County), Rockcastle River (Pulaski County), Otter Creek Park (Meade County), and Brigadoon Nature Preserve (Barren County). The field trips were generally well attended, ranging from 5 to 35, with a total of about 160 participants for the 8 field trips. We realize the need to disperse our field trips across the state, and try to do so whenever possible. In 1988, two of our outings were in western Kentucky, two were in central Kentucky, and four were in eastern Kentucky. We would like to have more activities in the western part of the state and if there are those with possible field trip sites or those that would volunteer to lead trips in western Kentucky, please let us know.

The attendance at our annual fall and spring meetings continues to be disappointing. In a survey that we conducted last year we found that a great majority of our members preferred a combination Saturday meeting-field trip over a Thursday night or other type of meeting. We therefore scheduled both our spring meeting and fall meeting in this manner, and did have a little better attendance, about 30-35, but still, we should be having much better participation. Please try to schedule these events on your calendar and make every effort to attend. Greater participation will make for a much better KNPS!

We did have a very enthusiastic group at our Fall Meeting at Cumberland Falls and I think everyone throroughly enjoyed the weekend. The 1989 Spring Meeting (see details below) will be our most ambitious so far, and we are looking forward to its being our most successful. As discussed in the articles by Julian Campbell and Charles Chandler in this newsletter, there are many upcoming projects, programs, and other possibilities for KNPS. A number of people have indicated their interest in becoming involved in special projects, and we well be contacting you to get these activites going next year. Let's make 1989 the best year yet for KNPS!

AN UPBEAT EDITORIAL by Julian Campbell

Several attractive things can be done in the coming year, or at least planned. Please send the newsletter any useful comments about these or other ideas for the future of KNPS. We need strong persistent leaders for each project.

* Establish life memberships ($50-100?), which will give us some financial security and enable us to forget about having to renew that niggling little $3.00 every year. However, we should justify this step by establishing a clear written program of planned activities that the society will continue to focus on throughout the years. The following activities could be begun or intensified.
* Exchange information on field trips with other natural history and environmental groups in the state, perhaps starting a monthly one page joint newsletter for all natural history groups. A longer 'journal' could be printed every six months, and a booklet based on KAS symposia printed each year.
* Offer even more field trips, without worrying about turnout. Small field trips are better for some purposes (especially on private land). Active botanists could advertize the highlights of their planned field research during the year, and simply invite the membership to join in on some selected trips, making them more like workshops.
* Encourage all members to pool information on species' distributions for the Atlas of the Kentucky Flora project being initiated by myself and others.
* Accumulate a slide collection for use in presentations (amongst ourselves and for the general public) and for an eventual publication (a new wildflower book for Kentucky?).
* Encourage some members to act as local 'stewards' (one per county?), looking for rare plants and interesting sites in each region, and being contact people for any special problems to do with conservation, setting up field trips, local public relations, etc.
* Propagate selected species for conservation, ornament and other uses. We should consider possible cooperation with the botanical garden and arboretum which may take shape in Kentucky soon, and which would involve much interaction with the general public. Such work would give more focus to the seed exchange idea. The membership could contribute propagules (seeds, transplants), cultivation effort (perhaps with cooperative work-days planned in our calendar) and a distribution network to the general public (perhaps for sale).
* Help develop, and eventually implement, a rare plant protection strategy for the state; how can we support plant protection through the government (perhaps with legislation) and through private means (perhaps with fundraising for The Nature Conservancy, and with botanical gardens)?

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

25th February, Saturday: 2-5pm. CENTRAL KENTUCKY WILDLIFE REFUGE, WINTER WALK. Led by Susan Studlar (Centre College), we will talk about plant survival in winter, from mosses to maples, and about winter identification of mosses, ferns and trees. A highlight will be seeing the unusual and attractive Fountain Moss (Fontinalis novae-angliae) at its only known location in the refuge. The first mile will be easy walking, followed by a steep ascent up a knob. The refuge is 13 miles southwest of Danville. Take KY-34 from Danville to Parksville, then take KY-1822 to KY-37 and turn right (west); then after half a mile turn left on Carpenter Fork Road; the refuge is up the hill on your left. The walk will be cancelled if road conditions are unsafe; call Susan (606/236-9315) to be sure.

22nd April, Saturday: 10 a.m. LILLEY CORNETT WOODS. Bill Martin (Eastern Kentucky University) will lead a trip entitled "The Mixed Mesophytic Forest and Spring Flora of Lilley Cornett Woods". It will be a strenuous hike for 4 hours; bring a sack lunch and canned drink or canteen. Bill says he would like to schedule a trip here each spring. He can be reached at (606) 622-1476.

5-7th May, Friday-Sunday. THE 1989 ANNUAL SPRING MEETING OF KNPS WILL BE HELD ON MAY 6 AT NATURAL BRIDGE STATE RESORT PARK. This will be in conjunction with the WILDFLOWER WEEKEND at Natural Bridge. A number of wildflower and natural history walks will be held from Friday afternoon, May 5th, through Sunday afternoon, May 7th. Plan to spend the entire weekend at the Park if possible. MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS NOW (606/663-2214). There are 35 rooms at the Hemlock Lodge 10 cabins, and 2 campgrounds. The Little Abner Motel is nearby and the Abner Motel is in Stanton. Reservations at the Park facilities will not be accepted unless you state that you will be participating in the WILDFLOWER WEEKEND. Mark your calendar and make your plans NOW. This WILDFLOWER WEEKEND is being co-sponsored by the Park and the Kentucky Native Plant Society.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

(Reminder: field trip leaders should give me a brief note after each trip. Ed.)

MOREHEAD AREA, 24th September. Only about 10 brave souls came on this rainy day. I understand that a good time was had anyway, and the white gentian was seen. We need a lot more attention to prairie-remnants in this area.
CUMBERLAND AND ROCKCASTLE RIVERS, 8th and 9th October. Some 30-40 people came on these two field trips, and attended our evening program at the Park. We managed to cram a lot into this weekend, with most expected rare plants seen, including the new species of aster, and an article in the Herald-Leader, and my fearless wading of the Cumberland River to meet a man about his woods, and seeing the rare Aster concolor in two new sites, and some further exploration of Long Point at dusk on Sunday. However, we were disturbed by the great increase in "All-Terrain-Vehicle" use along the Rockcastle. Can the Wild and Scenic River Status of this area be used to ban such use on private and public land? More work on this problem is needed in Frankfort and with the Forest Service.

REGIONAL MEETING ON WATER SUPPLY PLANNING FOR CENTRAL KENTUCKY/KENTUCKY RIVER

This meeting was planned by the Mayor of Lexington, Scotty Baesler, his staff, and Anne Gabbard (Kentucky Conservation Committee). It was held on November 30. Among the many speakers, Karen Armstrong-Cummings (President of KCC) gave a 25 minute presentation on "Environmental Issues", which was excellent. I attended as a representative of KNPS, and distributed a five-page discussion of some issues, from a botanical perspective. I may present a modified version in the next newsletter. In the discussion period, Willem

Meijer talked vigorously about how to improve land management in the region (and was soundly applauded). The important thing to come out of the meeting is that the mayor and others in authority do not appear to be pushing any one particular solution to the water supply problem. All practical solutions are being discussed and a study of them will be funded by the City and the Kentucky-American Water Company during the next year. A committee is being set up to contract consultants for this study. Let's hope that thorough discussion of environmental issues continues to be a part of this process. It is beginning to look as though a new Kentucky River dam may not happen, but the existing locks and dams will certainly be repaired and perhaps raised a little. Ed.

RARE PLANTS OF KENTUCKY: THE KENTUCKY LADY'S SLIPPER by Hal Bryan

Have you ever wondered about the plant that decorates the logo on your newsletter? The same plant embellishes your KNPS T-shirt. It is a native orchid, which like some bluegrass and bourbons, is named for our Commonwealth.

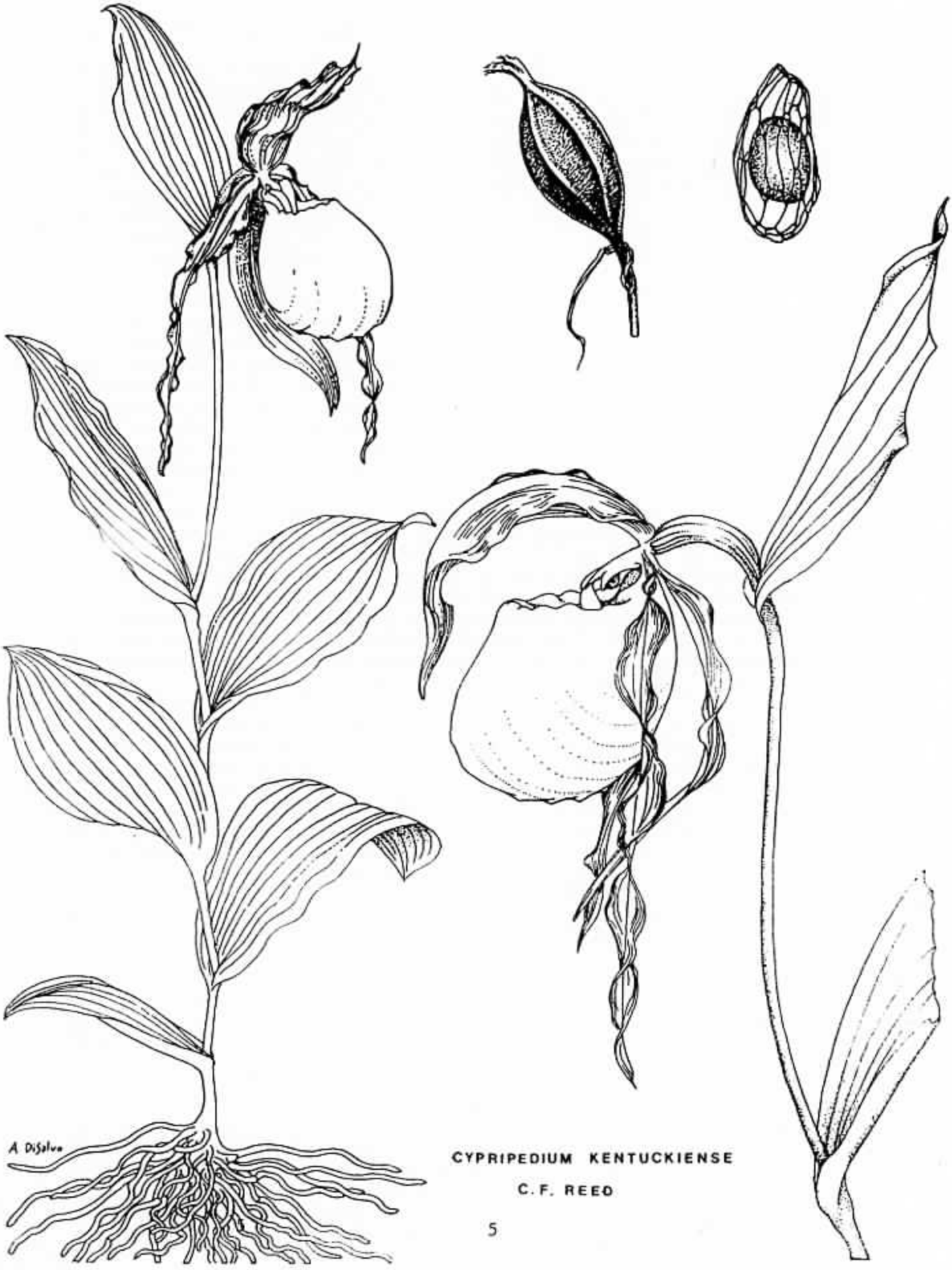
Although Kentucky Lady's Slipper was known in the time of Constantine Rafinesque (early 1800s), it was only recently (1981) described as a distinct species, Cypripedium kentuckiense. It is a statuesque orchid, 2-3 feet high, found in streambank forests of the southeastern United States. Five or six large oval leaves are scattered along the stem. Flowers bear a shoe-shaped lip, which measures 2 inches across and 2.5 inches high. The pouch or 'labella' of the slipper (a modifed petal) is a cream color with reddish brown spots inside, and the twisted sepals and petals behind it are maroon.

Orchids comprise a family that is highly specialized for pollination by insects. The labella of the Lady's Slipper often traps moths, bees and other insects drawn by both color and fragrance in a futile search for nonexistent nectar. If they escape the labella through the small opening, they must rub against the pistil and anthers, and thereby transmit pollen from plant to plant.

This conspicuous Lady's Slipper has been reported from ten counties in Kentucky, mostly on the wide, forested floodplains at the edge of the Cumberland Plateau. But, curiously, it has not been found along the Kentucky River or its major tributaries, including the Red River. The earliest verified collections are from Elliott County, but the largest population known, with several thousand plants, is in a dense cane thicket near Corbin in Knox County. It is a rare plant in Kentucky, but because it occurs in several counties, it is considered only of "special concern" on our unofficial state list, rather than endangered or threatened. However, it is uncommon in the seven other southeastern states where it occurs, and it is under review for federal protection by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Kentucky and Tennessee populations are disjunct from the rest of the range of the species, which is centered in the southern Mississippi River Valley.

Despite its widespread occurrence and local abundance, Kentucky Lady's Slipper is far from secure in Kentucky. Its highly productive woodland habitat is in constant jeopardy from logging or conversion to cropland. Additional threats to its existence are diggers who harvest roots for buyers of medicinal plants, and commercial collectors who dig hundreds of these beautiful orchids for resale in the nursery trade. Like most of our species in the family Orchidaceae, it is dependent on mycorrhizal fungi in the soil, and therefore does not transplant easily unless the whole forest is moved with it.

So, the next time you receive your newsletter or pull on your T-shirt to go botanizing, consider the lovely Kentucky Lady's Slipper, a symbol for both your Kentucky Native Plant Society and the rare plants of Kentucky.



CYPRIPEDIUM KENTUCKIENSE

C. F. REED

OAKS, ACORNS AND WILDLIFE by Charles Elliott (Biology Dept, EKU)

As autumn approaches, the forests of Kentucky undergo some dramatic changes that are tremendously importance for wildlife. People in the forest at this time mainly notice the color changes in leaves and their eventual fall to the ground. For many types of wildlife, it is not the falling of leaves that is an important rite of autumn, but the falling of acorns that is of paramount importance. The production of acorns by oak trees is often assumed to be a 'given' by people familiar with the woods. If you see an oak, you generally always see acorns on the ground around it. But unbeknownst to many is that the number of acorns produced by the different types of oak trees can vary tremendously from year to year, and that this variability in acorn production can dramatically impact animal populations in an area.

A 17-year study of acorn production in Louisiana documented the variability of acorn production among species of oak trees. Acorn yields were studied for seven species of oak, three in the white oak group, which requires one growing season to produce seed, and four in the black oak group, which requires two growing seasons. The white oak group included swamp chestnut oak or cow oak (Quercus michauxii), white oak (Q. alba) and post oak (Q. stellata); the black oak group included blackjack oak (Q. marilandica), water oak (Q. nigra), sandjack or bluejack oak (Q. cinerea) and southern red oak (Q. falcata).

At the end of the study, acorn yields were found to vary by species and year. Cow, white post oaks tended to have a relatively good crop every two years. Blackjack oak tended to have one good crop every five years. Sandjack and water oaks had four good years out of every six. Southern red oak had one good year in four. No regular cycle was apparant in the occurrence of large or small acorn years, so the size of the acorn crop was not necessarily predictable from the size in past years. What was noted was a "complementary effect" in yield between species in some years; yield for one species might be relatively small; while that of another might be relatively large.

Nutritionally, the acorn is a highly desirable food for wildlife. Relatively high in fat and carbohydrates, and containing protein, vitamins, calcium and phosphorous, acorns are a good food concentrate. Wildlife biologists have recognized that some animal species respond to the availability and quantity of this high energy food supply. Acorn crops may have a regulatory influence on reproductive success, survival, size of population and body condition of tree squirrels, white-tail deer and turkeys. For some species of wildlife, acorns are not an occasional or seasonal food, but are important year-round. In Alabama, researchers found that acorns made up nearly half the diet of white-tailed deer collected over a six-year period. Wild turkeys in Virginia, Alabama, Florida and Missouri have been found to consume acorns during most of the year; while bobwhite quail have been reported to comsume acorns during every month of the year except for May and September.

It has been estimated that to support a population density of two gray squirrels per acre for six months would require 27 pounds of acorns. To support 50 turkeys/acre for six months would require 68 pounds of acorns and to keep 20 white-tailed deer/acre for six months would necessitate having available 450 pounds of acorns.

Although the oaks are a common group in the oak-hickory forests of Kentucky and people very often consider one species of oak the same as another, oak trees are not created equal--just ask the animals of the forest.

FINDING NATIVE PLANTS FOR YOUR YARD AND GARDEN:
A NEOPHYTE'S HOW TO, WHERE TO... AND WHETHER TO By Charles Chandler

In his disappointment at not being able to convince the full legislature to fund a Botanic Garden in Lexington, Constantine Rafinesque wrote in his A LIFE OF TRAVELS: "I never owned an acre of ground; this garden would have been my delight; I had traced the plan of it, with a retreat among the flowers, a Green house, Museum and Library; but I had to forsake it at least, and make again my garden of the woods and mountains."

It's true--especially if you've learned a bit about the plants you're seeing--the woods and mountains can be your garden. But in the 160 years that have passed since Rafinesque's residence in Kentucky, the gardens of the woods and mountains have retreated considerably from where most of us live. Many of us who do own a little ground (even if it's just the earth in a couple of flower pots) now find that we can bring the mountains and woods a little closer to our lives by growing native plants and wildflowers in our yards and homes.

Fortunately, there are many native plants for which we can create a happy home away from home, and others for which we mostly just need to provide a hearty "welcome back". It's the latter that are often the easiest and the most fun to acquire and establish in our gardens. Sometimes, in fact, they're already there. If you're looking for an ornamental tree, don't get in such a desperate fury to root out the unceasing waves of honeysuckle from across the Pacific that you pull up the holly or dogwood seedling self-sown from the beautiful specimen across the street. Make sure you don't miss the tiny Rafinesque's violets in the spot where the dog used to keep things stirred up.

Dont't overlook the obvious in your search for natives for your garden, and keep your mind open to possibilities. Oftentimes, you can quickly "establish" a native plant garden simply by protecting and showcasing plants that are already there. For years now, I've grown my front yard vegetable and herb garden around an ever more magnificent and now seven-foot tall poke bush (Phytolacca americana). It arrived on its own. I left it at first for spring greens. It settled in and became a colorful addition, and now it's an elegant standard that provides a focus for the whole garden.

If you're not afraid to risk the dangers of an occasional "but isn't that a weed?" from a curious neighbor or friend, the common roadside and vacant lot natives can find a place in your garden. You can do interesting things with the likes of ironweed (Vernonia) and goldenrod (Solidago), Joe Pye Weed (Eupatorium fistulosum) and Brown-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia triloba). Depending on where you live, it can be smart to grow such commonplace (if not well-known) plants in formal beds or in an otherwise obviously ornamental manner. It might be politic to remove flowers as they fade, or seeds before they disperse. It it's obvious that someone (namely you) thinks they're pretty, that you've taken a bit a time and trouble to grow them, and most importantly, if they don't start popping out of everybody else's fescue, your neighbors might also come to the conclusion that "those things must be flowers".

Collecting a few seeds or plants from the wild for these most common natives should not be a problem so long as you remember to collect only in an area where the particular species is widespread, and in a locale where it is actually abundant. If the species grows on someone else's or on public land, find out from the proper authority whether collecting permits or permission are necessary. If the plants really are common and your needs small, a permit or permission might be obtained very easily. Be on the lookout for land being "maintained" at native plant expense, or for land being "developed". My

garden's blue lobelia (Lobelia siphilitica) came from seeds collected in a Lexington city park. Permission came easily, but it helped that native plants are not a priority at this particular park, and that I was able to point out that the standard maintenance routine, mowing down to the waterline of the stream where the lobelia grew, was not in the plants' best interest. It was a large population, and the mower's uneven efforts had allowed most of the plants to bloom. The maintenance supervisor was glad to have an excuse not to mow that section of the park one more time before fall, so I got some seeds. But there was no special reason to spare the plants through the next two summers. It looks now like the mowing and he drought have all but done the colony in. I'm glad I asked when I did.

There's another way to collect your own seeds for the garden. If you're a born plant explorer who savors the hunt and the uncertain results of the quest, but can't quite get the funds or the sabbatical arranged for a trip to the outback, take a field trip to the wilds of your local health food store, or grocery, or gift shop. Native plants are where you find them. And you'd be surprised what you can find in such expected environments.

At the health food store you're likely to find--all in one anomalous locale--pipsissewa (Chimaphila maculata), citronella (Collinsonia canadensis), boneset (Eupatorium perfoliatum), indian tobacco (Lobelia inflata), smooth sumac (Rhus glabra) and any number of other native plants' whole leaves, stalks, flowers and berries are sold for sweet and bitter teas, real and purported medicaments. Dump a box or a bagful onto a sheet of white paper, lace up your snake boots, and start your trek through the detritus with a fine tooth comb and a hand lens. If you're persistent and lucky, you'll find the remains of the one flower on the stalk that was pollinated and had set seed when the others were only ripe from the plucking. With some research and a little more luck you might even get those seeds to germinate. And with more luck still, they might actually grow up to be the genus and species you thought they might be in the first place. Not at all an ordeal for the timid or hasty, but one that's guaranteed to teach you something about native plant anatomy, identification, uses and culture. If the health food store is just a shelf in your grocery, drop by the produce department. Maybe you'll be able to find some Jerusalem artichokes--as fit for planting as they are for your plate.

For those of you who opt for the gift shop expedition, check out the dried floral materials and arrangements. Seed pods and berries of natives pop up all over the place when you start looking. Wreaths, bouquets, fussy-mussies, and pot-pourris may be full of exotic lotus, eucalyptus, artemisia and gysophila, but look harder and you'll find natives: bittersweet (Celastrus scandens) and holly (Ilex opaca), false indigo (Baptisia australis) and Black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia hirta), blazing stars (Liatris), milkweeds (Asclepias), sweetgum (Liquidambar styraciflua) and trumpet vine (Campsis radicans). Once again, you'll find viable seeds in pieces and parts that were destined, ultimately, for the dust bin. There are more efficient ways to find plants for a garden, but few that are more satisfying.

The most direct way, of course, to canvass the boonies in searches of native plants is--naturally--from your arm chair, in the quiet of your living room, with a good book. Thanks to the growing popularity of native plants gardening, it's becoming more and more possible to find mail order suppliers of native plants. But this method of acquiring plants can be the most harrowing of all. For many years now the major seed houses and nurseries have included wild flower sections in their catalogues. Unfortunately, these listings frequently represent major disasters for wild populations of plants.

As popular as wildflower gardening has become, the market has apparently not grown large and stable enough for the major retailiers to realize that committing time and capital to supply the demand in the normal way--propagating their own or their growers' stock--is necessary. They instead attempted to supply the huge numbers of gardeners they reach with plants or seeds bought in huge quantities from wholesalers, who buy them from brokers, who buy from dealers, who buy from storekeepers, who buy from diggers and collectors. This procedure absolutely depends on massive volume to make any money for anybody. That's why it works so well as a means of reducing native plant populations in the wild while assuring their unsurvivability in our gardens. The system could only be made more efficient if we paid collectors to dig up the plants and throw them straight in the compost.

According to a recent article in the New York Botanical Garden's Garden magazine "nearly all the wildflowers offered in general catalogs and by garden centers have been collected from the wild." Don't be misled by the plastic bags of dried up sphagnum and wildflower roots that you might find at your local garden center. They're packaged to look like they've come straight from the propagators in Holland. But they were born, lived and--usually--have already died in America. Pink Lady's Slipper (Cypripedium acaule), Snow and Large-flowered Trillium (T. nivale, T. grandiflorum), Jack-in-the-pulpit (Arisaema triphyllum), Dutchman's Breeches (Dicentra cucullaria), Crested Iris (Iris cristata) and Bloodroot (Sanguinaria canadensis) are among the species that are almost always collected by the large retailers. The author of the NYBG article found only six nurseries "experimenting" with propagation of the Large-flowered Trillium, but she found it listed in 13 catalogs as well as in slick plastic packets. It's enough to make Mr. Natural cry out for tissue culture.

There is one group of native plants for which some of the major nurseries, however, are excellent and safe sources. If horticulturally interesting variants or selected cultivars of native species interest you, there are some wild ones in the catalogs of Wayside Gardens (strong on tree and shrubs), and White Flower Farm (strong on perennials). A quick flip through Wayside's catalog will introduce you to such wonders as red and calico mountain laurel (Kalmia latifolia 'Olympic Fire' and 'Bullseye'), Pale Yellow Coreopsis (C. verticillata 'Moonbeam'), Cutleaf Staghorn Sumac (Rhus typhina 'Laciniata'), Variegated Box Elder (Acer negundo 'Flamingo'), Yellow Trumpet Vine (Campsis radicans 'Flava') and White Crested Iris (I. cristata 'Alba'). These are unique plants that don't occur frequently enough in the wild to be collectable. So here at least you can be sure they are nursery propagated. I'm less certain about the many "unnamed" species of natives included among Wayside's listings.

For plain and simple, old-fashioned wildflower species, you're better off dealing with the growing number of small nurseries who take pride in selling their own propagated native stock. The New England Wild Flower Society publishes a directory of mail order Nursery Sources for native plants and wildflowers hardy in zones 4, 5 and 6. The directory lists 58 suppliers who claim either to propagate at least 80% and wild-collect no more than 5% of their native sales inventory, or to sell only seed. The society "encourages" the harvesting of seed from "fields of native plants cultivated especially for commercial supply," but allows that "wild-collection of seed for commercial or resale purposes is generally ethical, as long as the regenerative potential of wild plant colonies is not jeopardized." As you can see, the Wild Flower Society feels that there's plenty of room between 100% collected and 100% propagated to fall short of the ideal and still make a huge improvement in the situation. The society's directory also lists 70 additional firms who sell native plants or seeds that are hardy in zones other than 4, 5 and 6, or who don't sell by mail order.

Kentucky straddles the squiggly and phantom boundary between zones 6 and 7. So Kentucky gardeners will have to do some judicious searching among firms from both parts of the NEWFS list if they want to find plants hardy in their locale. I have had experience with a few of the sources listed in the directory. The people at We-Du Nurseries (Richard Weaver and Rene Duval) in Marion, North Carolina started out in the Boston area, so they now offer many northern species that do well further south. On the other hand, many of the more southerly plants that reach up into Kentucky along the Cumberland and Rockcastle Rivers can be found in their catalog. We-Du's main inventory consists of nursery-propagated southeastern natives (including ferns and fern allies), but they also "are particularly interested in the oriental counterparts of our native wildflowers." They're the people to see if you'd like to meet a Japanese Solomon's Seal or a Chinese Jack-in-the-pulpit. Just keep an eye out to make sure your Kentucky Jacks and Solomons don't decide to abandon the neighborhood.

Other firms I've learned a bit about include Holbrook Farm in Fletcher, North Carolina and Milaeger's Gardens in Racine, Wisconsin. Holbrook is especially interesting for native perennial cultivars as well as for species. Milaeger's is good for many of the showier prairie flowers and grasses that still hold on in Kentucky. Of the companies that sell native plant seeds, Maver Seeds in Asheville, North Carolina has an incredible list of over 6,000 native and exotic species of trees, shrubs and perennials. You'll need to be prepared because their lists consist of Latin names only. Apparently this company became "The Seed Source" last year, and in the process its computerized ordering system got fouled up royally. I ended up with a few of the species I ordered plus some I didn't. A complaint got me some more that I ordered and more that I didn't--so I decided to quit while I was still more or less ahead. Maybe they'll be straightened out by spring. (Meanwhile, does anybody out there need seeds for seven different species of Sedum?)

Ordering seeds of natives presents other problems, too. The ever-present seed mixes are one. I have yet to see a "wildflower mix" that looks like it would work well for any specific patch of ground that I know of. If the components of the mix are listed, the proportions are not. Introduced as well as native species are often included, and if you can find a mix with only natives, it will generally include seeds for plants that prefer sun as well as those that prefer shade, dry as well as wet. Maybe this is carefully calculated to ensure that something germinates and blooms no matter where you're silly enough to throw the seeds, but I think this is the poorest way to acquire plants for your garden. Another problem is the large number of native seeds that ought to remain moist from maturity to germination. Many of the seed companies sell these seeds in a dried condition. You might get some to germinate, but you would have better luck if the seeds were treated more to their liking. According to Nursery Sources, Wildginger Woodlands in Webster, New York sells only 5% of its native species inventory as seeds. But the appropriate species in that 5% are stratified (kept moist). I think I'll give them a try.

As a general rule, it's best to buy plants and seeds from sources in your own or in similar climatic areas. Unfortunately, local suppliers in Kentucky are scarce. I know of only one Kentucky nursery, Singer Gardens in Stamping Ground, that has a history of selling a limited selection of propagated natives. They don't sell by mail order, and they've had trouble meeting the rising demand in the last few years, but they're definitely worth a stop if you're in the central Kentucky area next spring. Fortunately, there are additional suppliers in the works. KNPS member Danny Barrett of Barrett's Native Plants in Booneville is well under way to becoming the only commercial propagator of native azaleas and rhododendron species in Kentucky--perhaps in the southeast.

Members Marc and Sherri Evans are also gearing up now for full-fledged production next spring at their Shooting Star Nursery in Frankfort. They expect to supply native Kentucky plants from all of the state's various habitats. There must be similar Kentucky enterprises that other members contemplate or know about. If you do know of others, let the editor know right away and we can have a more complete list in the next issue of the newsletter.

As far as seeds are concerned, the idea of a KNPS Seed Bank germinated, but it seems to have damped off. So the KNPS has decided to try a less formal and more ancient method of human-assisted seed dispersal--the olde gardeners seed swap. One way to make sure we begin the process of propagating natives from our own gardens is to do what sociable gardeners have always done: collect seeds from our own holdings to exchange for seeds from other's. I'll sow the seeds of the swap in this issue of the newsletter. If you want to get involved, rush your information in to the editor so it can be listed in the coming edition.

Deciding to grow native plants and flowers sounds like a harmless and even virtuous scheme. Our native plants certainly deserve to be honorably present in our yards and gardens. But with wild plant populations everywhere threatened by inadvertent as well as purposeful destruction, we need to exercise an extra measure of responsibility if we want our horticultural endeavors to merely reflect--not ultimately replace--our gardens of the woods and mountains.

DIRECTORIES of Native Plant and Seed Sources:

Nursery Sources. 72 pp. 1987. New England Wild Flower Society, Inc., Garden in the Woods, Hemenway Road, Framingham, MA 01701. $6-95.

The Gardener's Book of Sources. William Bryant Logan. 271 pp. 1988. Viking Penguin, Inc., 40 West 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010. $12-95.

KENTUCKY SOURCES of Native Plants and Seeds:

KNPS Members' Seed Swap. If you have native plant seeds from your garden or property that you'd like to offer for exchange, send your name, address, offerings and mailing requirements to Charles Chandler, 925 Maywick Drive, Lexington, KY 40504. Tel: (606) 277-9718. Here are some current offerings:

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I have seeds of Great Blue Lobelia (Lobelia siphilitica), Butterfly Weed (Asclepias tuberosa), New England Aster (A. novae-angliae), Evening Primrose (Oenothera biennis), Black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia hirta), and Wild Senna (Cassia marilandica), that I'll exchange species-for-species for other native seeds (especially other Lobelias). If you have no seeds to exchange, give me a call and we'll negotiate. Send requests along with exchange seeds and a self-addressed stamped envelope to Charles Chandler (above address).

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Barrett's Native Plants. Danny Barrett, P.O. Box 181, Booneville, KY 41314. Native azalea and rhododendron plants. Send inquiries with a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Shooting Star Nursery. Marc and Sherri Evans, Bates Road, Frankfort, KY 40601. Native Kentucky Plants. Send Inquiries with a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Singer Gardens. U.S. Hwy 227, Stamping Ground, KY 40379. (606) 255-5907. Best to call with inquiries about wildflower availability.

MAIL ORDER SOURCES of Native Plants and Seeds:

We-Du Nurseries. Route 5, Box 724, Marion, NC 28752. (704) 738-8300. Southeastern native perennials, ferns, fern allies and their "oriental counterparts". Catalog is 50 cents.

Holbrook Farm. Route 2, Box 223B, Fletcher, NC 28732. (704) 891-7790. Native perennial plants and cultivars. Catalog is free.

Milaeger's Gardens. 4838 Douglas Ave., Racine, WI 53402-2498. Perennial plants including native wildflowers and grasses. Catalog is $1-00.

Wayside Gardens. Hodges, SC 29695-0001. Garden plants including native perennials, tree and shrub cultivars. Catalog is $1-00 (applicable to order).

White Flower Farm. Litchfield, CT 06759-0050. Garden plants including native perennial and shrub cultivars. Catalog subscription $5-00 (applicable to order).

The Seed Source (formerly Maver Seed). Route 2, Box 265B, Asheville, NC 28805. Seeds of native and exotic trees, shrubs and perennials. Grass list is 50 cents (with descriptions, $1-00).

Izard Ozard Native Seeds. P.O. Box 454, Mountain View, AR 72560. Native perennial, shrub and tree seeds. Send self-addressed stamped envelope for list.

Wildginger Woodlands. P.O. Box 1091, Webster. NY 14580. Native perennial biennial, tree and shrub seeds and plants. Catalog is $1-00.

Windrift Prairie Shop. Douglas E. Wade, RD2, Oregon, IL 61061. Seeds of "Illinois genotyps of prairie grasses and forbs". Flyer is 40 cents.

Prairie Nursery. Route 1, Box 365, Westfield, WI 53964-0116. Plants and seeds of midwest wildflowers and grasses, wetland plants and some "edge species". Catalog is $1-00.

Garden in the Woods. See New England Wildflower Society address under "Directories" above. Seed list is available to non-members in late January. Send a self-addressed, 45 cent-stamped, long envelope, Attention SEEDS.

KENTUCKY NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
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