



February 1, 2022

Dear Metro Council Member:

As Board Members of the Louisville Chapter of Wild Ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes, we are writing to express our enthusiastic support for Metro Louisville's newly revised Weed Ordinance (Bill 0-035-22). By more clearly defining terms like "weeds" and providing guidance on planting rules, the revised ordinance lowers the barriers for people who want to replace lawns with native plant gardens on their property, but not risk being cited or fined.

Wild Ones is a national organization with 65 chapters across 23 states whose mission is to "promote environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities." Over the last 25 years, the Louisville Chapter of Wild Ones has partnered with other organizations here to establish native plants in our parks (Wildflower Woods in Cherokee Park, for example) and other sites.

In the past 5 years, we have refocused our efforts to educate home and business owners on the benefits of establishing native plant gardens in their properties as an important way to improve our city's environmental quality, while simultaneously sustaining our local biological heritage. Why is this latter goal important? Because our world is experiencing a **Sixth Great Species Extinction** created by humanity and this extinction is **occurring in America's suburbs** as well as in the Amazon. For example, since 1970 in the USA, bird populations have plummeted by 1.5 billion and 46 bird species have lost more than half their populations. Seventy-three studies worldwide show that in the next decades we can expect to lose 40% of the world's insect species, and that **pollinators like butterflies, moths and native bees (like bumblebees) are the most affected**. Kentucky Fish and Wildlife personnel are calling the rate of species loss here "Mission Critical".

There are simply not enough natural areas left to support populations of our native plants and wildlife. Therefore, scientists and conservation organizations like National Audubon and The Nature Conservancy have been calling for greater use of a **community-based conservation approach to help sustain native species where we live and work**, by creating spaces on our property that are better habitat for them than typically exists. This would allow us to "redesign" human-dominated landscapes to support more native species without detracting from our use.

By encouraging more homeowners to replace some lawn area with native plants, we can better support a local food web of native birds and insects because they have co-evolved with these plants. For example, the iconic Monarch Butterfly, which is a threatened species, requires milkweed and only milkweed for raising their caterpillars. Milkweed, like many native flowering plants, can easily be grown in our gardens. Willing homeowners supply the enthusiasm, labor and resources. *They would also catalyze the growth of nascent native plant nurseries and landscaping businesses here.*

By replacing lawns with native plant landscaping, we have the opportunity to improve conditions in our neighborhoods and the city as a whole by increasing stormwater retention (controls local flooding), reducing noise and air pollution from lawn mowers and leaf blowers, and reducing water usage and water pollution from the fertilizers and toxic chemicals used to create that “perfect” lawn. And simultaneously we would provide habitat for an essential and delightful array of native bees, butterflies and birds for people to enjoy right at our doorsteps!

As members of the Wild Ones Louisville Board, we can attest through our 2100+ followers on Facebook that there is an enthusiastic following of people in Jefferson County who want to participate in Community-based Conservation and are engaged in replacing lawns with native plants on their properties. As compared with the old Weed Ordinance, the newly revised ordinance would enhance people’s confidence in investing in natural landscaping and should reduce doubts by others who may be unfamiliar with native plants and may harbor unfounded negative images or myths about gardening with them.

Our world desperately needs a **win-win for Nature, People and Cities**. We can do that through Community-Based Conservation right here in our own yards. By removing the uncertainties in the outdated Weed Ordinance, *the newly revised Weed Ordinance can start us on a path to creating a healthier and more sustainable relationship with nature in our city. We hope you will support it.*

Sincerely,

The Board of Wild Ones Louisville

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