

Wild Ones-Gibson Woods 10th Biennial Native Plant Symposium
Beyond the Garden: Your Yard is an Ecosystem - Help it Thrive!

Saturday, October 17th, 2026

St. John Township Community Center
1515 W. Lincoln Highway, Schererville, IN 46375

Program Agenda

9:00-10:00 a.m. Registration & Continental Breakfast

10:00-11:15 a.m. KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Jewels of the Undergrowth

Kevin Wiener, All Bugs Go To Kevin

Did you know that the majority of all animals on Earth have six or more legs? Prepare to have your perceptions transformed as we explore the fascinating life cycles, behaviors, and ecological significance of these often-overlooked inhabitants of our planet – the arthropods! Have you ever stopped to consider the intricate dance between a bee and a flower, or the silent work of decomposers breaking down leaf litter. Join Kevin Wiener as he explores how insects, spiders, mites, millipedes, and their kin contribute to pollination, pest control, nutrient cycling, and provide food for many animals.

11:30-12:30 p.m. Oak Savanna Garden Design: Going Beyond 'Prairie-Style' Pollinator Gardens

Mike Weis, Dropseed! Native Gardens and Ecological Restoration

Oak Savannas are ideal models for “hyper-productive keystone species,” crucial for supporting local food webs, as noted by entomologist Douglas Tallamy. Many urban yards suit Oak Savanna gardens, yet prairies and forests are more common models. Native garden designer Mike Weis explains the value of oak savanna ecosystems, their benefits to wildlife, and practical steps for creating your own native garden inspired by these resilient landscapes. Restore oaks and help transform your yard into a wildlife habitat.

12:30-1:15 p.m. Lunch, Socializing, and Shopping!

1:15-1:30 p.m. Small Group Discussions: Thinking Outside the Box

1:30-2:30 p.m. Soil Food Web – The Food Chain Beneath our Feet

Rebecca Koets, Purdue Extension

The soil food web is a systems way of understanding the life in the soil. Learn about tiny complex food chains, micro-organisms, invertebrates, and how to boost the health of our soil. Learn how to identify healthy and less healthy soil and how to help. Identify soil organisms and begin to learn about bio complete compost.

2:30-3:00 p.m. Silent Auction Results

ALL ARE INVITED TO JOIN US

Attendance is limited, so get your registration in!

Registration fee includes: 3 Speakers, Continental Breakfast, Buffet Lunch, Silent Auction, Book Sale, Door Prizes & More

Need more information? Contact us on our website gibsonwoods.wildones.org, or call Kim (219) 433-5731

Want to register & pay online? Go to our website and click on the symposium link.

**** Wild Ones is a 501(c) not-for-profit organization ****