

The President's Corner



Dear Friends,

For those of you who don't know me – let me introduce myself. I have served on the board of NPSNJ for 7 years, first as board entomologist and then as a vice president. In fact, I have been a member of NPSNJ since 1994 (shortly after I moved to the state). I am quite honored to have been elected as president of NPSNJ at this exciting time.

Why exciting? NPSNJ membership has increased by 500% in the past 6 years! So many folks are looking at their gardens, fields, and forests in entirely new ways. The idea that native plants are critical to the environment and that we can all make a huge difference by our own choices has driven people to appreciate our native flora in ways they never did before.

I was thinking about this letter when I was watching mourning cloak butterfly caterpillars (*Nymphalis antiopa*) feeding on my pussy willow (*Salix discolor*) the other evening. These caterpillars were doing some visible damage to the pussy willow leaves – but that is OK. Those species have co-evolved and the willow will recover just fine after the caterpillars wander off to pupate (which they started to do just yesterday). Our various willows in the state (NJ has 13 native species of willow, *Salix* spp.) support a vast array of wildlife – more than 450 different caterpillar species and specialist bees alone (without counting the beetles, treehoppers, sawflies, and other insects that also use these plants). These insects, in turn, are a critical food source for birds – and so the web of life expands. More and more we appreciate native plants for not only their intrinsic beauty, but also for the role they play in a functioning ecosystem – whether that is a forest, a preserve, or our own backyard. It is critical that we not only



study and appreciate, but also protect the fabulous diversity of native plants that are the very base of the ecosystems around us.

As the new president of NPSNJ, I am thrilled to be in such good company with folks who are as passionate about native plants as I am. During the worst of the pandemic, we visited via zoom and heard great speakers through our NPSNJ webinar series. As we move forward this year, with (hopefully) the worst of the pandemic behind us, our in-person get-togethers have increased – and it has been good to see folks in person again!

Having said that, our webinar series continues and is an amazing source of information and education. (Quite a few of our webinars were recorded and are available for you to watch anytime from our web site (<https://npsnj.org> or YouTube channel.)

I hope to see you on one of our wonderful webinars or, even better, in person at one of our meetings or events! Enjoy this newsletter and be sure to keep an eye on our website for upcoming events.

All the best,

Randi V. Wilfert Eckel, PhD

Spreading the Word *Beyond the Choir*

By Deb Ellis
Essex County
Chapter Leader

As a member of NPSNJ, thank you for being part of the “choir”— those of us who are passionate about native plants. I hope this article inspires you to volunteer with your chapter to spread the word!

John Black as inspiration:

I want to begin by paying tribute to John Black (1961-2020), four-year president of the Native Plant Society. One evening in 2019, John drove a long distance to meet with our newly formed steering committee. John encouraged us to focus on outreach for the most impact and we have faithfully followed his guidance.

What is outreach? Outreach targets folks who have never gardened with native plants and non gardeners.

Why outreach? The biodiversity crisis is severe, and daunting. But yard by yard, town by town, county by county, the native plant movement helps individuals be part of the solution.

Strategic marketing: We are lucky to have a steering committee with diverse talents including marketing. We reach new people through social media, press releases, posting on local news sites, and emailing to environmental contacts. This free marketing has a high success rate in bringing new members.

Garden tours: People love seeing other people’s gardens, so tours are an easy draw. Including gardens in different seasons, sizes and locations helps people visualize how natives can be used. To make tours effective, volunteer hosts answer questions, which is a great volunteer opportunity for members



Tabling at plant sales and eco-fairs:

To be strategic, we focus on places where we will encounter interested people, such as events where native plants will be sold, or environmental events where we are likely to reach a sympathetic audience.

Link events with plant sales: In Essex, as in many places in NJ, it is difficult to find native plants, so we often link garden tours or tabling with plant sales, inviting Toadshade Wildflower Farm or other native nurseries.

Involve kids: One of our steering committee members, Jessica Miller, created a simple art project to make bookmarks with nature prints. Not only do such projects engage kids, but they start conversations with their parents.

Create synergy by partnering: This spring, following a suggestion by members John and Susan Laudau, we partnered with the Great Swamp Watershed Association plant sale. Members can link their own chapters to other groups they are involved with.

Outreach works! In March one of our volunteers led a winter walk and our marketing reached many “new” people. I was gratified to see some of those people six weeks later at a native plant sale.

Some ideas from the Essex Chapter and a Tribute to John Black



Share your love of native plants by volunteering with your chapter; our many volunteers often tell us how rewarding it is to be a part of outreach.

Joe Pye Sky High

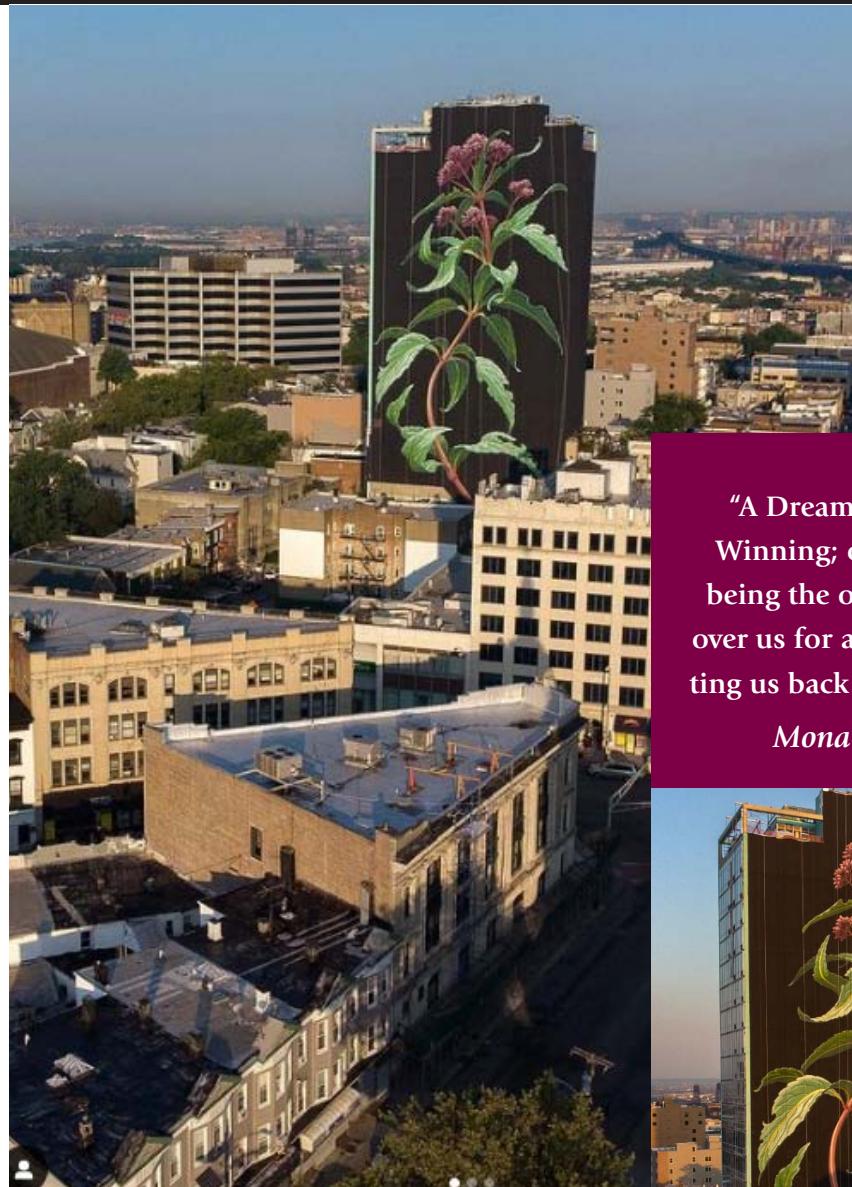
By Lorraine Freeney
*Hudson County Chapter
Co-Leader*

Last summer, a Joe Pye weed rose up in Jersey City—twenty stories high and in full bloom, its leaves unfurling against the stark black background of an apartment building in one of the busiest sections of the city.

Jersey City is dotted with vibrant murals that reflect the city's diversity and rich culture, and the Jersey City Mural Arts Program has commissioned over 200 artworks in the past decade from local, national, and international artists. But Mona Caron's mural, officially titled "Shauquethqueat's Eutrochium", immediately captured public imagination in a way few others have done. The huge Joe Pye weed on Cottage Street looks simultaneously unlikely and right at home looming over this densely built up area, with its leaves nibbled by unseen insects and a tough, rugged charm that matches the city well.

The Hudson county chapter of NPSNJ was founded just a few weeks before the mural's arrival, and the co-leaders saw it as an excellent omen. What could be a better signal that the time is right for Hudson county's biggest city to become more proactive in promoting and protecting native plants than by putting a huge Joe Pye weed in full view?

There is also a personal connection to NPSNJ, as artist Mona Caron based her work on a Joe Pye plant photographed in Canco Park by



Dawn Giambalvo, president of Canco Park Conservancy and one of the Hudson chapter's co-leaders.

The mural is one in a series from the Swiss-born, San Francisco-based artist Caron. Her "Weeds" project includes what she terms "heroic portraits" of native plants growing locally, and the series includes marsh rosemary in San Jose, California, a dandelion in Mendrisio, Switzerland, and most recently, a showy milkweed in Denver, Colorado.

**"A Dream of Nature
Winning; of plant life
being the one towering
over us for a change, put-
ting us back in our place"**

Mona Caron



She focuses on these plants as symbols of nature's resilience and strength even in urban environments, describing the Jersey City mural on her website as "a dream of Nature winning, of plant life being the one towering over us for a change, putting us back in our place." For this chapter, it's a potent, ever-present reminder of NPSNJ's mission and our own hopes for our city and our county.

News from Hudson County Chapter



*Mayor Gonnelli of Secaucus, Dawn, Lorraine and Kim
(from left to right at the Secaucus Green Festival in May).*

By Kim Correro

*Nature Enthusiast—
Gardener—Native Plant Based*

The Native Plant Society of New Jersey's Hudson County Chapter has just celebrated its one year mark. Co-leaders Kim Correro, Dawn Giambalvo and Lorraine Freeney are involved with projects that will help provide native plant resources and education to local urbanites. These projects include work on a pollinator pathway in Lincoln Park West in Jersey City and the creation of the new Imagine Garden in Secaucus.

"We don't have easy access to native plants here in Hudson County and it is a big problem," said Correro. "Our chapter's mission is to help people understand the purpose of natives and make it easier for them to incorporate the plants into their home gardens, parks and greenspaces." The chapter strives for two plant sales per year and recently hosted sellers from Well Sweep Herb Farm who traveled over an hour to the city with a truckload of native plants and drew a huge crowd.

Some members of the chapter are currently enrolled in the Rutgers Environmental Stewards (RES) Program, collaborating with Hudson County 4-H as part of their internship project. "As a chapter, we knew we wanted a portion of our volunteer efforts to focus on youth programming," noted Correro.

"Claudia Urdanivia, the director of the Hudson County 4-H, developed an incredible urban learning garden in the heart of Jersey City and approached us about working together. She was also one of the RES program instructors for our class so it seemed like a perfect fit."

For the remainder of 2022 the Hudson Chapter plans to continue its outreach and advocacy work and hopes to keep growing its membership. The chapter also plans to host two more book club discussions and will be reading *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer for September. To learn more follow us on Instagram at @npsnjhudsoncounty or contact the co-leaders directly at hudson@npsnj.org.



The Imagine Garden in Secaucus. Dawn with LA Phil Wolf.



Phillips 66 Mini-Grant

New York - New Jersey Trail Conference
Native Plant Habitat Gardens
600 Ramapo Valley Rd, Mahwah, NJ

By Linda Roehler

With our mini grant funds, from NPS we created a fern garden along the entire northeast side of the building adjacent to Darlington Brook. We purchased 4 species of ferns from North Creek Nursery and had donations of 3 additional species. In total we planted,

31 Maidenhair ferns
(*Adiantum pedatum*),
32 Lady ferns (*Athyrium filix-femina*),
64 Christmas ferns
(*Polystichum acrostichoides*), and
47 Marginal wood ferns
(*Dryopteris marginalis*),
7 Ostrich ferns,
3 Netted chain ferns, and
14 Hayscented ferns.

The dark mulched areas indicate our planting beds. Red flags outline paths and yellow flags indicate existing plants to preserve. During this spring planting, we weeded the beds, and planted 32 lady ferns and 64 Christmas ferns. Seven ostrich ferns were planted along the stream bank and existing patches of sensitive and bracken fern were preserved. We also mulched the area to keep weeds down over the summer and set up a watering schedule.

Starting in May and continuing over the summer we began clearing the second half of the fern garden on the rear side of the deck. This area

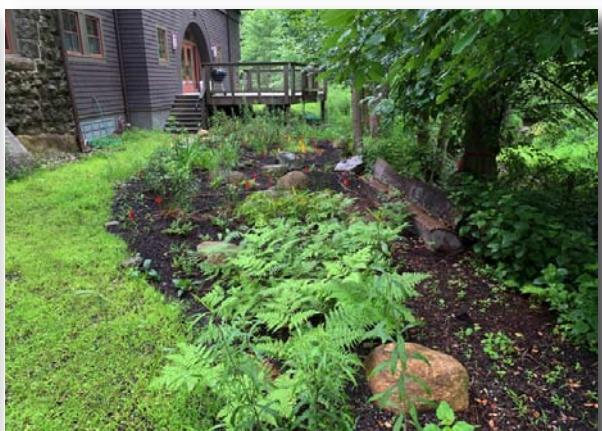
receives more sun and was filled with goldenrod, dogbane and mugwort. We dug out roots and mulched the cleared ground continuing to remove sprouts all summer during several workdays to finally get rid of the mugwort and goldenrod.

On two workdays in September 2021, we planted the rear bed and filled the front bed with more ferns. We now have 9 species of native ferns displayed in our new fern garden which will serve our goal of displaying ferns seen in our local natural areas. When the ferns spread, this area will serve as a propagation bed for plants to use in the forested swamp across the stream and the forested area opposite our parking lot. We are very grateful to the Native Plant Society of New Jersey for their support.



Our new Fern Collection include:

Bracken fern
Ostrich fern
Christmas fern
Sensitive fern
Hayscented fern
Netted chain fern
Marginal wood fern
Lady fern
Maidenhair fern





Narthecium americanum, Bog Asphodel,

Drum Roll: Fanfare for NPSNJs Plant of the Year Category: Rare & Special

John Suskewich
Essex Chapter

Narthecium americanum, Bog Asphodel, is a New Jersey gem, not only because it is rare, reclusive, native, and beautiful, but also because it has been extirpated over the years from all the other states in which it grew. Now it can only be found within the borders of the garden state, and then just in a few, probably 3 or so isolated places! Its continued existence here is a testament to the foresight and watchfulness of planners, environmentalists, and nature lovers who have created and protected our unique Pine Barrens, the singular habitat on which this fastidious plant depends.

Bog Asphodel grows in open, low-lying wetlands that alone can satisfy its specific light and hydrological requirements. The spike of star shaped yellow blossoms rises in late spring and is followed by vermillion seed capsules in summer and fall.

The leaves are narrowly linear. A single plant may not knock you out, but because of its rhizomatous habit, it spreads to form colonies that are an impressive sight. The genus *Narthecium* is part of a small plant family, *Nartheciaceae*, which are Monocots, and is related to lilies and grasses. There are just a few other *Narthecium* species in North America and Eurasia.

Old world asphodel flowers were a trope in classical mythology. One part of the underworld was an Asphodel Meadow, a kind of purgatory for ordinary people, not super-villains but not A-listers either. Yet the asphodel was one of the immortal flowers and was supposed to have grown in the Elysian Fields. In the 21st century, New Jersey will have to do.



Amelanchier arborea, Downy Serviceberry

Drum Roll: Fanfare for NPSNJs Plant of the Year Category: Backyard Perennial

John Suskewich
Essex Chapter

The common name of our other plant of the year, *Amelanchier arborea*, the Downy Serviceberry, is alleged by some to derive from its time of bloom early in the spring when the ground thawed and the burial service for those who died during winter months could finally be held. Killjoy etymologists have hypothesized that service is actually just a corruption of sorbus, another tree with similar fruit.

Serviceberry has many other common names: Shadbush (it does bloom when shad spawn up east coast rivers), Shadblow (ditto), Sarvisberry (a southeast drawl of service) Juneberry (the berries do ripen then), Saskatoon (the word Native Americans called its tree and fruit).

Downy Serviceberry is a lovely, fairly common native North American understory tree. It usually grows 15 to 20 feet high, a nice compact size for most gardens. *Amelanchier* has showy, snowy, fragrant white flowers that when seen in the April woods look like a remnant of dispersing fog.

Its June ripening fruit can be made into a rather seedy lattice-top pie; dried like currants and raisins it can be added to tea-cakes, scones, snack bread, or muffins. In indigenous cooking, it was a basic ingredient of pemmican, an important Native American staple food. All kinds of wildlife treasure it. Bees and butterflies pollinate the flowers, while birds and mammals devour the fruit.

Advocacy Notes

By Kazys Varnelis

<https://npsnj.org/get-involved/advocacy/>

The Native Plant Society of New Jersey created a statewide legislative committee in August 2020. Our charge: to identify state legislation that impacts the environment and native plants in particular. In December 2020 and January 2021, we ran campaigns to promote the passage of two bills.

A1580/S83: Jersey Native Plants Program

Jersey Natives initiative at the Department of Agriculture, modeled on the successful “Jersey Fresh” and “Jersey Grown” programs, will promote the sale of native plants at retail garden centers and nurseries. We are proud to be working with Secretary Fisher and the Department to make this program a reality.

A2070/S1016: The “Save the Bees Bill” is critical since Scientific research concludes that neonicotinoids (neonics) contribute to massive bird and insect losses and may also be harmful to humans and wildlife.” This landmark legislation makes New Jersey a national leader in protecting pollinators, wildlife, and people from neonic contamination,” said Lucas Rhoads, staff attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council. “The law relies on the most up-to-date science to ban the largest uses of neonics in the state. This is great news for not just pollinators that are poisoned by neonics, but for all the farmers who depend on insect pollination and for all New Jerseyans that value thriving ecosystems.”

A3677/S2186: Prohibiting the sale, distribution, or propagation of certain invasive plant species

The NPSNJ legislative committee currently supports A3677/S2186, a bill that prohibits sale, distribution, or propagation of certain invasive plant species without a permit from the Department of Agriculture (these are meant to be used by scientists and researchers, not broadly by industry). Although we would love a broader list of plants, this brings attention to those still sold in nurseries and others found in wild areas. The current plant list includes

- Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*)
- Mimosa or Silk tree (*Albizia julibrissin*)
- Porcelain berry
(Ampelopsis glandulosa var. brevipedunculata)
- Japanese angelica tree (*Aralia elata*)
- Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*)
- Japanese clematis (*Clematis terniflora*)
- Autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*)
- Weeping lovegrass (*Eragrostis curvula*)
- Winged burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*)
- English ivy (*Hedera helix*)

- Japanese hop (*Humulus japonicas*)
- Sericea lespedeza (*Lespedeza cuneata*)
- European privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*)
- Amur honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*)
- Morrow's honeysuckle (*Lonicera morrowii*)
- Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*)
- Japanese crabapple (*Malus toringo*)
- Chinese silvergrass (*Miscanthus sinensis*)
- Eurasian water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*)
- Oriental photinia (*Photinia villosa*)
- Callery or Bradford pear (*Pyrus calleryana*)
- Common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*)
- Jetbead (*Rhodotypos scandens*)
- Multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*)
- European water chestnut (*Trapa natans*)
- Siebold's arrowwood (*Viburnum sieboldii*)
- Japanese wisteria (*Wisteria floribunda*)
- Chinese wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*)

We encourage you to ask your state legislators in the house and the senate and to vote for this bill, which is good for the environment and New Jersey.

A4264/S2807: Liberty State Park Conservation, Recreation, and Community Inclusion Act

Finally, we have another urgent action item! The Hudson Chapter notified us of a danger posed to Liberty State Park in Bill A4264/S2807, “Liberty State Park Conservation, Recreation, and Community Inclusion Act.” This bill would earmark \$250 million dollars towards commercial upgrades and for-profit proposals that prioritize economic development at the expense of the city’s largest open public greenspace, the 21.5 acre Craven Point Peninsula. They include a 7,000-seat concert arena, swimming pool, a 5,000-seat stadium, and 6.1 acres of ball fields and athletic courts. Craven Point one of the last undisturbed natural estuaries in the New York City area is a varied habitat consisting of upland meadow, saltwater marsh, maritime forest, tidal pools, mud flats, and the longest natural beach in Upper New York Harbor/Hudson River. Home to over 250 species of birds and a critical breeding habitat, it also provides an important migration stopover. Rare birds sighted at Craven Point, include snowy owl, great horned owl, long-eared owl, surf scoter, clapper rail, Swainson’s hawk, northern goshawk, red-shouldered hawk, ruddy turnstone, seaside sparrow, and Ross’s goose. Diamondback terrapins, harbor seals, and horseshoe crabs also frequent this ecosystem and urban educational resource.

Write your legislator to amend or vote against this bill, to prevent development in Craven Point Peninsula.

You can find your legislators at
https://openstates.org/find_your_legislator/.



Wild Suburbia

Vacant houses
nearly hidden
by a leafy tangle...
slow crawling vines
edge their way upward
clinging tightly
to their hosts...
nature's redecorators
morphing structures
now standing out
as truly green houses
amid pristine ones
with well-groomed lawns

grasses and sedges
join the race
with snaky climbers
gaining height
growing non-stop
aiming to envelop
man's creations...
putting on the squeeze
wily and willful
working to crack
to crumble
what came from earth
what was transformed
beyond recognition...
taking it back
on nature's clock

Hara L. Rola 2021