

The President's Corner



Dear Friends,

As I write this, there is an 18-mph wind blowing and the forecast tells me it will go down to 60F tonight...but I know that spring is just around the corner. Even now, some of our amazing native plants like Skunk Cabbage are not only waking up but preparing to flower. New Jersey is at the juncture of several ecoregions and consequently we have an enormous range of species diversity packed into the state from the Highlands to the Coastal Plain. Each native species is uniquely adapted to our climate, our soils, and support the wildlife around them including birds, mammals, insects of all sorts, and even fungi. A veritable treasure trove of biological diversity.

Kicking off our 40th anniversary year, our annual meeting is also just around the corner. Because of Covid-19, this will be our first in-person conference since spring of 2020, and I am thrilled to have the opportunity to get together with native plant enthusiasts from all over our region!

Our fabulous webinar series that launched as the pandemic set in has helped to expand our reach and we ended 2022 with more than 1,200 members throughout NJ but also in many other states as well.

To serve all of our members, we have created our first ever hybrid conference this year – the Annual meeting will be held at Ocean County College in Toms River on March 4th and will also be

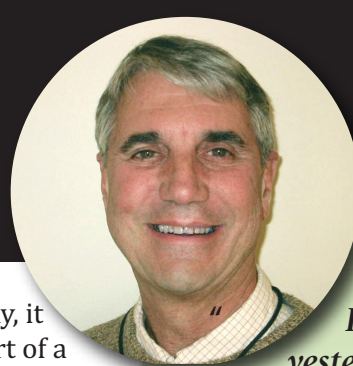


live-streamed so that folks can participate and view our exceptional lineup of speakers via zoom. The theme is 'Earth, Wind, Fire, and Water' – I think you'll be as excited as I am about the presentations for the day, covering the fabulous wetlands of the Meadowlands, fire ecology of the Pine Barrens, the specific and intimate relationship between native bees and native plants, and how all ecosystems rely on the very soil beneath our feet.

Keep an eye out, too, for special members only classes, events, and opportunities coming up as we celebrate our 40th year! Our first 2023 members only class in Botanical Drawing has been a great success, and we have a lot of other great ideas in the works.

All the best,
Randi V. Wilfert Eckel, PhD

Bob Swain *Treasurer, Past President, and Member since 1983*



The Native Plant Society of New Jersey [NPSNJ] celebrates our 40th Anniversary in 2023. This commemorative series combines 40th Anniversary oral histories of long-time members with articles from 1983-2003 newsletters.

By Bobbie Herbs Historian, NPSNJ

You may know Bob Swain as The Native Plant Society of New Jersey's treasurer for the past dozen years or so. But Bob has served the Society since its beginning in 1983. Bob held the Presidency from 1988-1992. During that time, the society celebrated its 10th Anniversary.

In the 1993 newsletter Vol XI #1, Bob shared, "The original idea of a native plant society was the brainchild of John Trexler. John was the former director of horticulture for the Morris County Park systems, headquartered at the Frelinghuysen Arboretum in Morristown. The original idea was, a lot of other states had native plant societies, and New Jersey had none. So, [John Trexler] gathered a bunch of people who were interested in native plants: Hubert Ling, William Flemer IV,

Michelle Rice, and me. Initially, it started off as a group, just sort of a chatting at Frelinghuysen Arboretum."

After John Trexler moved to Massachusetts for a position as Founding Director of Tower Hill Botanic Garden in Boylston, a small group of four remained, "the committee drew up the constitution, bylaws were adopted, a board of directors appointed, and officers elected. The first directors then incorporated into a 501(c)(3)."

Bob continued, "We had a pretty good group. But there were originally about 300 members. Most were Friends of the Arboretum. They kind of migrated over to the Society. After John left, they dwindled away and we went down to a handful of members. We started having meetings, rotating around to people's houses.... It was a small group, maybe we'd have 10 or 15 people attend the meeting with refreshments.

"It seems like yesterday that a small group of native plant advocates were sitting around a table at a diner discussing the possibilities of starting a new organization in New Jersey focusing on the use and preservation of the natural flora."

Hubert Ling recalled the early days "..."we [were a] very small group. In fact, we almost died several times. Well, Bob, and I were sort of the only board members that were active for quite a while [in the 80's]. And I held the position of horticultural chair. And Bob was the treasurer. And I think he was president too."

Yet the small group carried on. "In 1991 Cook College agreed to take us under their umbrella. In addition to a change of mailing address, they provided a permanent meeting location on campus. In return, the Native Plant Society agreed to construct and maintain a native plant garden as part of the Ornamentals Display Garden. It [was a] representation of Jersey native plants [and] accessible as a teaching aide for other groups and the University community itself.

When asked about the today's Native Plant Society today, Bob replied, "You know, [it] [the Society] already surpasses any expectation...I never envisioned that it could get to this scale.



Photo Above: Bill Young, Bunny Jaskot and Bob manning a NPSNJ booth at Whites Bog



Photo to Left: A NPSNJ meeting. Left to Right: Bob, Hubert, Bunny Jaskot (former board member and recording secretary) Tony Federici (Past President) bottom right Bill Young (Former President)

NPSNJ Trivia Page

By Bobbie Herbs
Historian, NPSNJ

1 What year was the NPSNJ founded?

1983. John Trexler, who was employed at the Frelinghuysen Arboretum, came up with the idea originally.

2 Where did NPSNJ first meet ?

Bob Swain: We started rotating meetings around to people's houses. It was a small group, maybe we'd have 10 or 15 people. Then in 1991 we went to Cook College. They offered the turf house, which was right behind the building that they use for administration.

Hubert Ling: The Board met at the turf house for probably 10 or 15 years. And then after that we met at all the board members' homes for a while, which got kind of hard because we had to find all these houses somewhere out in the country. And they didn't have their name on the mailbox. In fact, they didn't even have their address on the mailbox, which made it even harder to find them. We finally decided we'd meet at the Dawson Corporation, Bob Swain's business. At least we knew where it was.



1992 NPSNJ Newsletter
with Krajci announcement

3 How did NPSNJ get involved with the Krajci Preserve?

Krajci Preserve was 9/10 acre, a wooded piece of property with a little intermittent stream running through the back of it. It was owned by the Krajcis and is located in Hunterdon County on Alfalfa Hill Road, Milford. They were going to build a retirement home on the property. The problem was the property was too small, too sloped, and they couldn't get a variance for the setback or to get out of the wetland limit line for the stream. So, they decided they put it out for donation. Hubert was the one that found the announcement that they were going to donate the property to a non-profit that would preserve the property and keep it in a wooded state in perpetuity. Hubert applied on behalf of the Society, and they decided to give it to us. There was also another entity, a bereavement society that was involved too. We said you know what, there's no problem with that, we could layer their interest in the property on ours, creating a little meditation area down by the stream where people could come sit and commune with nature and contemplate.

Once committed to the donation, we got a property survey and a grant from DEP Green Acres to do a little two car pull off parking area, clear some invasives and do a minimal amount of planting.

4 Did you know that NPSNJ has a Rain Garden Manual?

When Tony Federici's was president (2006-2010) we got a grant and created the Native Plant Society Rain Garden Manual. That grant money helped formulate the document and get it published. It was pre-internet, so it was an actual print copy.



5 Where did Rusty Bell (Recording Secretary since 2003) gain his passion for plants?

It struck first as a kid, I liked working with plants. I loved, and still do, building gardens. You just stuck it in the ground and it would grow in Florida where I grew up. In high school, I had my own little side business doing lawns. I don't know if you know much about St. Augustine grass, but it's really thick. It's hard to cut through the grass with a push mower. It took you all day. My mother felt sorry for me. She ended up helping me get a real gasoline rotary mower.

When I moved up to NJ after college, I was still wanting to work for nurseries, lawn maintenance companies, landscaping and connected with Bob Swain in the 1980's.

NPSNJ Presidential Trivia Page

By Bobbie Herbs
Historian, NPSNJ

1 How did Hubert Ling, past president, meet his wife and partner Millie?

Hubert & Millie Ling: "We met at Brown University in Providence, RI. We were both grad students there. And we were also in the Chinese Association at Brown. The funny thing is, we were at a Chinese Association event and the only two people who couldn't speak Chinese that were Chinese. And, you know, in a social gathering all the Chinese want to speak in Chinese. So, we were left to talk to each other.



2 Who is Kathy Salisbury?

Bob Swain: "Kathy Salisbury was President from 2010 – 2016.



She was the driving force in getting chapter growth. Kathy jumpstarted the Society into where we are today. Even though New Jersey is a small state, it was cumbersome for somebody up in Sussex to get down to Cape May or Salem or Atlantic counties.

Kathy's idea was to try to get more participation in areas that would be more locally available and relevant. The folks up in Sussex are not dealing with the same kind of environment or the same kind of soils that the people down in Cape May or Atlantic County are. It just made it easier for everybody in those local areas to get together on their own and deal with more local issues. The chapters were set up similarly to how they are today with leaders and in person meetings, hikes, and so forth".

3 What President had a passion for dragonflies?

John Black, President
2017-2019

Hubert: "John Black was really interested in dragonflies. That was his love. He had a huge dragonfly in a big lump of amber that he took to meetings. It was probably three pounds or so of amber. It's polished and you can see the dragon fly inside. He also had a dragon fly pond at his home."



"You either have a fishpond or a dragonfly pond. You can't have both because the fish and the dragonflies don't like each other. He gave lectures on dragonflies. Now, I thought that's a little strange for the Native Plant Society president, but that's what he wanted to do. "(Perhaps he was ahead of his time as we now know that insects are often specialized and need specific native plants to survive.)" "I tried to talk him into giving talks on native plants but he was more knowledgeable about dragonflies than he was about native plants. He was very energetic. He ran all over New Jersey and helped coordinate the chapters and got them on board."

NJ NATIVE TREES: River Birch *Betula nigra*



John Suskewich
Essex Chapter

Hark, hark, the extraordinary bark of our native *Betula nigra* or River birch, seen in the photos at Montclair's Anderson Park. The unfurling strips look like they're being removed with a cosmic carpenter's plane and provide rich winter interest. This handsome native tree, usually multi-trunked, has a height and spread of about forty feet with a gracefully rounded mien.

Unlike most birches, which thrive in cool, moist conditions, this one copes with New Jersey's climate that is trending ever warmer and warmer. As the name suggests, River birch may prefer moist soil but can handle drier conditions.

Betula nigra supports a rich variety of wildlife: butterflies such as tiger swallowtail and mourning cloak, several types of silk moths, and many seed foraging birds, courtesy of the catkins. Its medium size makes it suitable for most medium sized yards, and its fascinating parchment-like bark that's so striking in winter, seems as if it's ready to receive some haiku from nature's stylus, making River birch a very special tree.



NPSNJ Nature Poetry Workshop with Ann E. Wallace, Poet Laureate of Jersey City

Four Saturday classes during National Poetry Month April 1, 8, 15, 22, 11am-1pm on Zoom

Enrollment capped at 16 participants
This is a Members Only Program

By Kim Correro,
Hudson Chapter

"Nature Poetry" is a generative workshop in which participants will learn different poetic forms and methods from observing the natural world. Each workshop session will highlight a poetic form or style, beginning with reading and discussion of model poems by contemporary or well-known poets. Participants will then write together, drafting a nature-inspired poem of their own in that tradition. Writers will be encouraged to share their work aloud and to complete and/or revise their drafts for the next class.

In weeks two through four, participants will have the opportunity to share finished drafts with the class for focused feedback through workshoping.

Poetic forms to be introduced in the workshop may include--but are not limited to--short form/variations on haiku, ode and praise poems, haibun, elegy, how to poems, and persona poems. Instruction on literary devices and poetic techniques will be woven into each lesson.

Ann E. Wallace, PhD, is Poet Laureate of Jersey City and Professor of English at New Jersey City University. A lifetime gardener, she is host and co-producer of Saturday Morning Poetry for the Hudson Chapter of the NJ Native Plant Society. Her writing and teaching, though often focused on illness and trauma, are infused with nature, hope, and an appreciation for the life found in unexpected places when we slow down and look. She is author of the poetry collection *Counting by Sevens* (Main Street Rag, 2019), and her published creative work and media appearances can be found at:

[www.http://www.annwallacephd.com](http://www.annwallacephd.com)

You can also follow her on Instagram @annwallace409.

Registration information will be announced in early March via Constant Contact and on www.NPSNJ.org

For more information, email Hudson Chapter Co-leader, Kim Correro at: <mailto:kimcorrero738@gmail.com>



When we write as poets about the natural world, we must slow down and open our senses, tuning into all that we see, hear, smell, touch, and feel. As we sink into nature's rhythms and mysteries, we reflect on our role within the environment. When we shine a lens on the life around us, whether through the smart phone cameras we all carry in our pockets now, with graphite on paper, or through the language of poetry, we are likely to respect, care for, and even love that which we are seeing. And, we may just see ourselves reflected back in that lens.

NPSNJ Botanical Drawing Class

By Mary Bilderback,
Monmouth Chapter

Who will look at a ginger root or a bulb of garlic in the same way ever again? Not the fortunate members of the Native Plant Society of New Jersey who participated in February's Botanical Drawing class.

Offered by the NPSNJ in celebration of its 40th anniversary, this superb Botanical Drawing class was taught by Katy Lyness, "a passionate home gardener whose interests brought her to New York Botanical Garden's Botanical Art and Illustration Program."

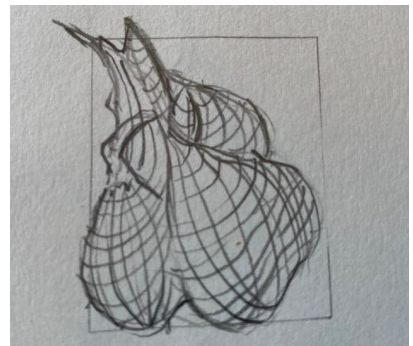
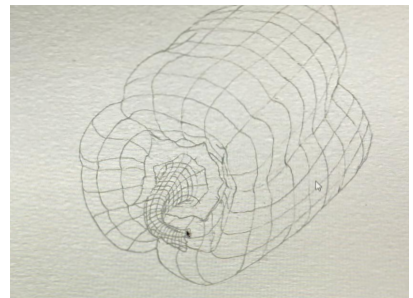
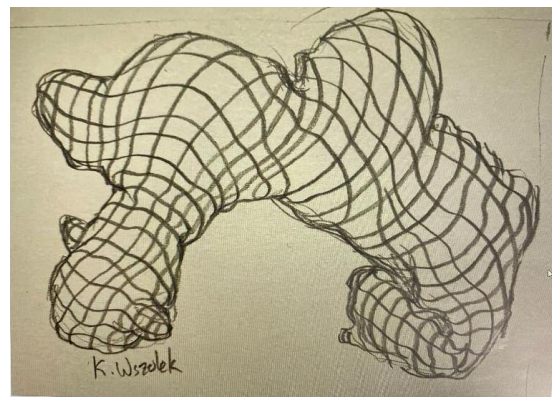
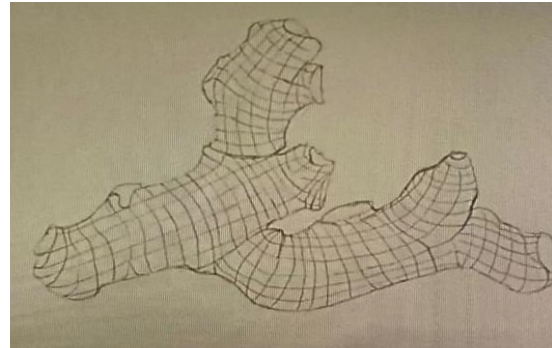
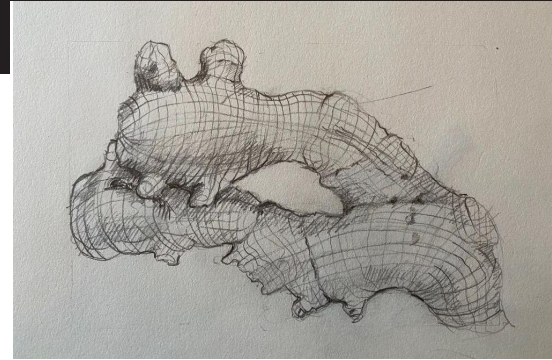
Katy has an MA in Art Education from Columbia University, Teacher's College. Her work has been featured in the American Society of Botanical Artists Annual International Exhibition. She is an active member of the Tri-State Botanical Artist Group. What a professional, instructive and delightful program she presented!

In one of her very instructional

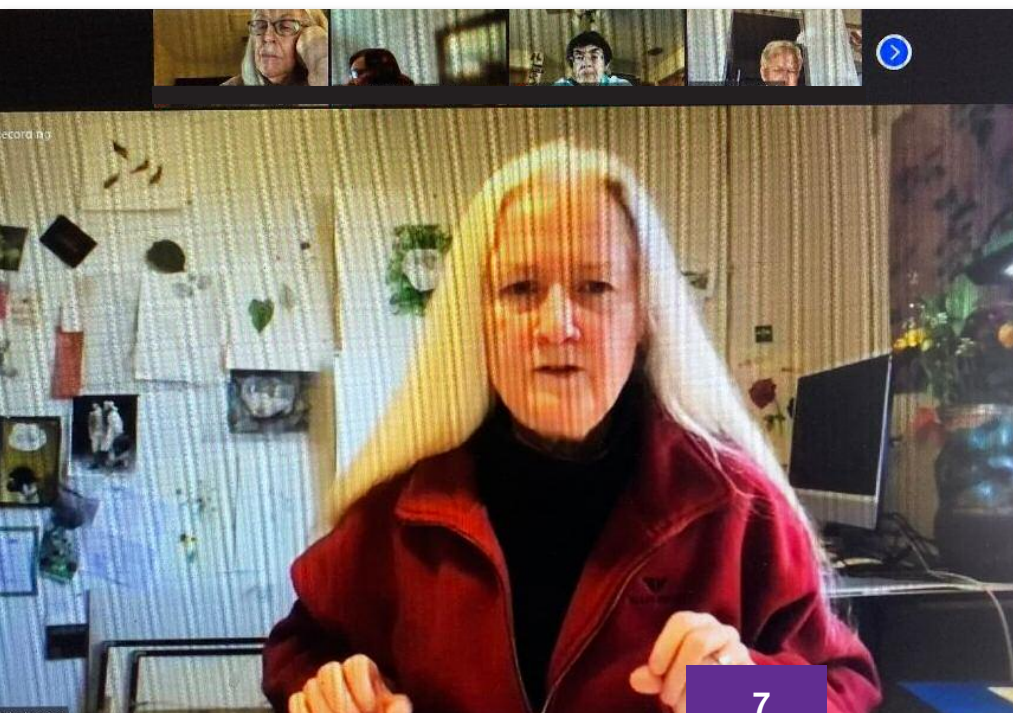
handouts, Katy gives her goal for botanical art: "to render a botanical subject, emphasizing pertinent information with correct measurements, correct colors, in an easily understandable and esthetically pleasing way."

Drawing materials and excellent resources were thoroughly discussed; measuring skills, and critical exercises were all demonstrated in this online class.

Students included folks with a variety of backgrounds: landscapers, professional illustrators, biologists, environmental science teachers, journalists, digital animators. Many were Master Gardeners. Each came with unique reasons for taking the course, but all shared a love for plants, and a desire to pay more reverent attention, and see more intimately the other creatures with whom we share the planet. We hope that the class will be offered again when the spring ephemerals are up and about, and the redbuds are stirring.



20 members of NPS got to chime in weekly to Katy Lyness's class





Shinrin-yoku (Forest Bath)

follow the quiet path
away from civil life
go forest bathing
dive deep
into the deciduous realm
no water needed...
bathe in essential oils
that seep through bark
vapors to envelope
body, mind, and soul
primitive symbiosis
to heal thyself
reconnect with past roots
learn one's true
natural identity

Hara L. Rola 2014