

The President's Corner



Although not a large state, NJ contains more major eastern ecoregions than any other state.

Dear Friends,

As sure as one day follows the next, autumn has once again arrived marked by cooling temperatures, shorter days, changing leaves, and the swirl of those leaves in the wind as they tumble and fall across the landscape. I would invite you to think, for a moment, on how this season is also accompanied (as always) by the distribution of seeds far and wide – scattered on the winds by simple aerodynamic force or silken parachutes, hooked onto the fur (or pant legs) of passing animals, and carried away by wildlife looking for a meal or stashing food away for winter. Although, not all native plant seeds mature in the fall, the sheer quantity and diversity of seeds that ripen and disperse in fall is quite astonishing. Native asters, agrimonies, maples, oaks, goldenrods, gentians, milkweeds, violets, grasses, sedges, viburnums, sumacs, roses...the list quite literally goes on and on. This is particularly true in New Jersey, which is unique in its

surprising diversity of ecoregions (areas defined by a unique combination of geography, light, and moisture

<https://www.epa.gov/eco-research/ecoregions>).

Although not a large state, NJ contains more major eastern ecoregions than any other state: we sit at the juncture of the major northern and southern ecoregions. The NJ Highlands are the southern end of an ecoregion that extends to Maine, New Brunswick, and even Nova Scotia. The southern end of NJ is the northern tip of a coastal plain ecoregion that extends almost to Georgia. Other ecoregions represented in NJ similarly extend south, west, and north – all essentially converging on NJ resulting in an extraordinary diversity of plants and animals that call NJ home. Where I live, in Hunterdon County, I count myself very fortunate to be within just a few miles of the intersection of 3 major ecoregions (the northern piedmont, northeastern highlands,

and the ridge and valley ecoregions). This results not only in a terrific diversity of native plants, but an accompanying diversity of wildlife: birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, butterflies, moths, native bees, and so many other creatures that rely, one way or another, upon the ecological services provided by those plants. For both native plants and animals, NJ is often the northernmost population, or the southernmost population of organisms whose species range might reach for hundreds of miles.

Many of you already know how passionate I am about our native diversity. So you know just how excited I am to tell you that our upcoming fall conference, 'Hidden in Plain Sight – The Outstanding Natural Diversity of New Jersey' will celebrate this species richness. We will delve into the ecological diversity of our state, our woodlands and highlands, rare species of the piedmont, and what climate change may bring (and is already bringing) to our coastal marshes. We have a fabulous lineup of speakers for this virtual conference, and I certainly hope you will be able to join us November 4th.

All the best,

Randi V. Wilfert Eckel, PhD

Membership Update, Fall 2023

By Kazys Varnelis
NPSNJ Vice President
of Membership

We welcomed the end of summer with a first for NPSNJ: the implementation of a new member management system on our Website. Having grown from 300 members in 2019 to over 1,300 this year, it was time. Over 25% of members have logged in: fantastic! We were all expecting glitches, but the process went remarkably smooth.

All members will receive emails when membership is up for renewal; no more double renewals, no more missed renewals. You can log in at any time and renew your membership early. If you haven't received an email from us with your unique User ID, please e-mail me at membership@npsnj.org.

This new system allows us to offer certain content only to logged-in members.

Already, links for the video of the annual meeting and a 25% discount for Jennifer Jewell's new book "What We Sow" (**until October 31st**) are available upon login. We will have members-only tickets for various events that have limits on the number of people that can participate and discounts to the annual conference and other events will also be available.

I had planned to make this the priority for my first year as vice-president, but with the system in place in just under six months, it's time to look ahead at the next six to eighteen months. Our chapters are an integral part of NPSNJ but we

are a statewide organization and it's time for us to offer more statewide initiatives and programs. Of course, our new Website is a priority—as webmaster I am dedicated to building out more information for members.

Boardmember Kim Correro has done a great job with the various statewide programs and classes she created and we have more on deck.

Finally, don't forget that we aren't just a gardening organization, we are a society dedicated to the appreciation, protection and study of the native flora of NJ, with a diverse constituency interested in other aspects, from advocacy and science to conservation.

We are always asking what more we can do for our members. I welcome your ideas and help as we move forward.

NPSNJ is a 501 (c) 3 organization and contributions are fully tax deductible. If you are current on your membership, you are welcome to donate at:
<https://npsnj.org/donate/>

New membership system FAQs:
Why do we need a unique User ID?

People change e-mails, so an e-mail alone can't be a way to refer to you. If you want, you can use your e-mail to log into the site instead of that User ID. The only caveat is, make sure to use the right e-mail and the right password!

Why are password requirements so stringent?

Easily guessed passwords are a security risk and as a NPSNJ member, your ability to log into the site opens up possible vectors of attack from hackers. Bots run by hackers are always trying to break in. Our security software says there have been over 400,000 attempts to attack our site. We aren't a special target, but it's a crazy world. The password isn't difficult to create, make it long with some numbers and a symbol.

Is it safe to give you our credit card information? You are a volunteer-led organization, right?

Yes and yes. All credit card information is gathered via Stripe, a secure, industry-standard payment processor. Last year Stripe processed \$817 billion worth of transactions. Apple, Amazon, Etsy, Walmart, and Target—among many others—use Stripe to process credit card transactions. We don't see or keep your credit card information.

For more FAQs, visit
<https://npsnj.org/membership-faq/>

ECO Regions of Northwest NJ

By Alana Steib
& Lynn Dubnoff
Sussex Chapter

Any member of the Sussex Chapter of NPSNJ can attest to the fact that we garden in enormously different eco-regions across the county. Following Route 23 North into Sussex County you enter the first ridge-line of Sparta Mountains/Hamburg Mountain with elevations from 1,060 to 1,300 feet. This is the Glaciated Reading Prong of the Highlands, region 58i. Elevation means cooler summer temperatures and more snow in winter when other parts of NJ are experiencing rain. A wonderful way to see the eco-region's large rock outcroppings and acres of mature, upland hardwood forest is with a visit to the Bog Overlook Trail in Sparta Mountain WMA. The trail to the

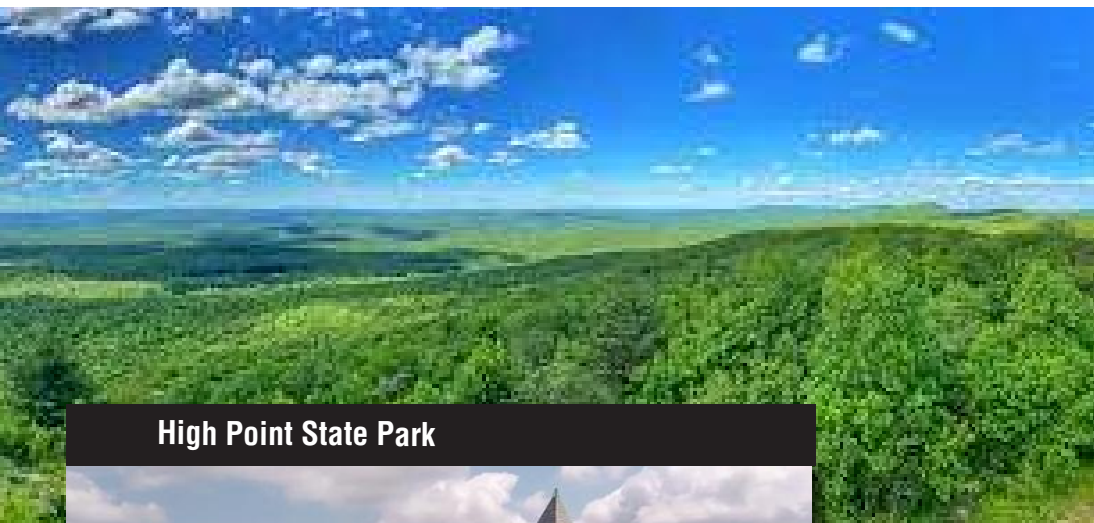
overlook starts at the Edison Monument in Sparta. Those wanting a more challenging hike might like to try the Stairway to Heaven Trail, part of the Appalachian Trail that goes through Vernon, NJ.

Descending from the Highlands down into the valley you enter the Glaciated Limestone Valley region, 67j and the Shale and Slate Valleys, 67k. It's a different world entirely! A hike to the Hyper Humus Marsh, a former commercial peat bog in Lafayette reveals unusual plants and is also a very popular loop trail for birders. The Paulinskill Valley and Sussex Branch Marsh Trail Loop is a fairly recent addition to the system so it might not be on older maps.

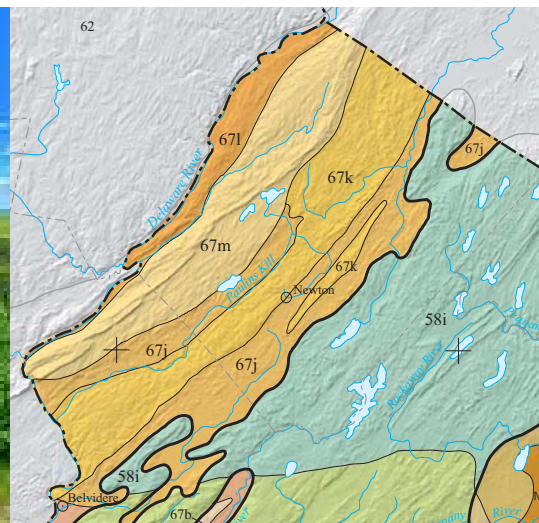
<https://www.alltrails.com/trail/us/new-jersey/paulinskill-valley-and-sussex-branch-marsh-trail-loop>

Continuing westward in Sussex County elevations climb again as you enter the Northern Glaciated Ridges, 67m. Stokes and High Point State Parks have the highest elevations in NJ. The rock tops near the Interpretive Center look more like plants from an alpine region, with short, old pines bent over from the wind and growing out of what looks like pure rock outcroppings at elevation 1,803'. Our Chapter members who garden in this part of the state can testify to what a challenge it is to garden in such a limestone rich soil. It's a pH nightmare! A hike in the Dryden Kuser Natural Area at High Point on the White Cedar Swamp Trail reveals some gems. It is a high elevation wetland that contains plants also found much further south at high elevations along the Appalachian Mountains.

Dress warmly if you visit in Winter!



High Point State Park

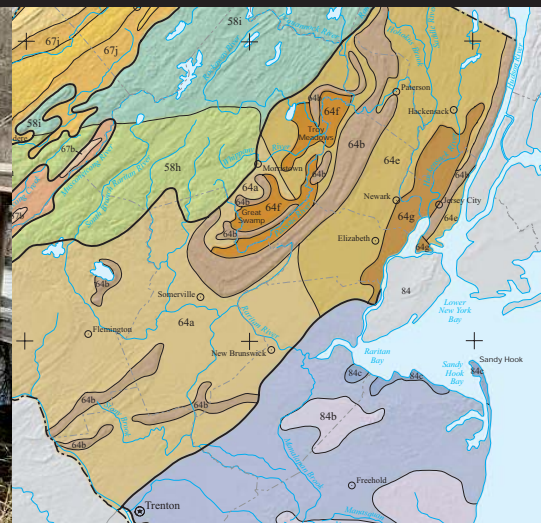


Stokes and High Point State Parks have the highest elevations in NJ.

ECO Regions of Northeast NJ



Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge



By Kazys Varnelis
Essex Chapter, NPSNJ
Vice-President of Membership

Comprised of Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, Passaic, Sussex, Union, and Warren counties, Northern New Jersey is the most densely settled part of the state, with half the state's population but less than a third of the state's land area. That land, however, is the most ecologically and geologically varied in this already highly diverse state. It contains 3 of the state's 5 Level III ecoregions and 13 of the state's 17 Level IV ecoregions, stretching from ancient Precambrian rock laid down before plants or animals inhabited dry land in the Highlands to the recent Meadowlands, shaped in the last Ice Age. If there is one defining factor to this area, it is the late Wisconsinan glaciation that covered the area from 25,000 to 12,000 years ago.

Northern NJ is marked by forests, though precious few are old growth. Until the arrival of the chestnut blight, these forests comprised mainly oak and chestnut trees, the latter as abundant as the former. *Kalmia latifolia* (mountain laurel) and *Rhododendron maximum*

(rosebay rhododendron) are found underneath and at forest edges. On northern-facing slopes and in cooler spots like ravines, hemlocks often dominate, but are now threatened by the invasive hemlock wooly adelgid.

My own little patch of land, on the First Watchung Mountain above Montclair Township, is testimony to this history. The Watchung Mountains are the products of basalt uplift at the end of the Triassic Period, some 200 million years ago, when Africa pulled away from North America and the continent of Pangea broke up, forcing lava into the surrounding Newark basin. About a mile from my house lie the shores of what was once Lake Passaic, a massive glacial lake stretching for 20 miles and marked by swampy areas throughout, from the Great Piece Meadows in the north to the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. Eastern Red Cedar once grew on these slopes, but these were long ago fed into hearths and furnaces, barely remembered in the name of the neighboring town, "Cedar Grove." Uncontrolled deer populations have devastated understory growth, leading to large amounts of invasive plants. Although I use

measures to protect my plantings from deer—from spraying with nontoxic "Deer Out!" to Orbit's motion-activated "Scarecrow" sprinklers and even remote cameras to alert me of their presence—in the nearest local preserve to my house, Mills Reservation, native understory growth has been eliminated and the landscape is dominated by Japanese barberry, Oriental bitter-sweet, and Japanese stilt grass.

But we do have so much ability to change things! The Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and Great Piece Meadows, as well as Troy Meadows, are the result of individuals banding together to create a preserve. Beyond preservation, cultivating appropriate native plant species, including trees is critical to helping the local ecosystem. (I have planted at least 50 trees in seven years of gardening on my half-acre property.) Working to find humane solutions to the historically unprecedented overpopulation of deer and dealing with the external threats of invasive plants, exotic pests, and climate change are our biggest challenges going forward. Perhaps one day, we can imagine living in this heavily populated area in greater harmony with nature and making this into a true "garden state."

ECO Regions of Central NJ

By Kathy Trarbach
Hunterdon Chapter

It's official! "Central Jersey exists," proclaimed Gov. Murphy after signing a tourism bill last summer.

Middlesex, Mercer, Somerset and Hunterdon counties cinch the middle of NJ into a tight belt, and what a green belt it is! This diverse geographic region reaches from a bit of Coastal Plain on the east through the Piedmont Plateau and into the rocky hills of the Highlands. Like the rest of NJ, our native plants suffer from pressures of development, deer overpopulation and invasive species, but many places illustrate the stunning geographic and botanical diversity of the region.

Starting near the ocean on the coastal plain, Cheesequake State Park near Matawan highlights the transition from salt and freshwater marsh ecosystems to cedar stands and upland forest. Scattered throughout the park is perhaps the best collection of lady slippers in the state. Usually found in acid soil near conifers, the pink lady slippers illustrate a symbiotic relationship with the soil fungi, which help nourish the plants and break down



Ken Lockwood Gorge

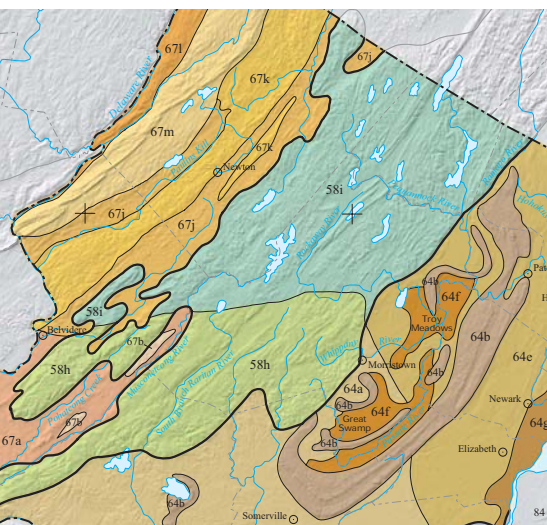
their seed coats. At the edge of the Inner Coastal Plain, the Plainsboro preserve hosts trails through a former quarry and 1000 acres of open space featuring blueberries, sweet gum trees and bushy bluestem grass.



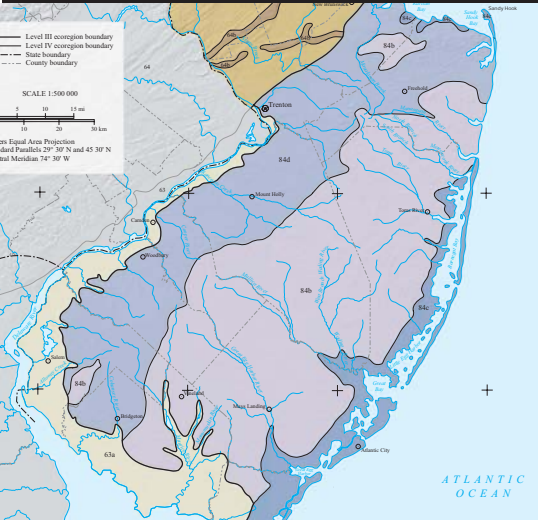
Purple milkweed

this rough and rocky terrain was not suitable for agriculture, so some sections of forestland remain relatively intact. Over three dozen species of native plants in the Sourlands are rare or endangered including the green violet and wild comfrey. The Sourland Mountain Preserve alone has 11 trails available to explore this area. The Sourlands adjacent Duke Farms model sustainability and demonstrate how consistent deer management enables native plantings to rebound.

The Ken Lockwood Gorge from High Bridge to Califon provides a spectacular introduction to the Highlands. Steep forested rocky walls flank both sides of the South Branch of the Raritan River where a stony path takes the hiker by trout fishermen, wildflowers in season, trickling cascades and waterfalls, and the most noticeable plants of the rocky slopes—evergreen Christmas and marginal wood ferns. The shady gorge is a green haven on a hot summer day, and an evergreen delight in the winter. Central Jersey: it's real and it's a great place to explore.



ECO Regions of Southern NJ



By Joe Alvarez
*Delaware Bayshore Chapter
Leader*

Hmm, I can remember saying this to myself many times walking around the garden, at a local wildlife refuge, or on the dunes in Southern New Jersey. “Something delightful and new has just been discovered. And I have been here the whole time.”

Here in the southern part of the state, we have a unique convergence of sorts pertaining to the natural ranges of certain plant species, along with those of a migratory nature (International Bird Migration). Cape May and Atlantic counties, along with portions of Cumberland and Salem counties, are the southernmost exposure of a few northern species and the northernmost exposure of a few southern species.

The geological features for the southern half of the state include the inner and outer coastal plains, with a dominate soil type known as downer soil. It consists mostly of sand and its various combinations with other organic and inorganic materials; this aspect helps to determine which plant species can be

found in the region. The Pine Barrens is a good example of how a soil type affects plant communities. As the saying goes, “right plant for the right space” (or soil). And I do mention this all the time, “Down here in South Jersey, we live in the biggest sandbox with some of the best weeds.”

Though I could list many tree species you may find here like the infamous **Paw-Paw**, the **Atlantic White Cedar**, the illusive **Kentucky Coffee tree**, or a rumored wild stand of **Bald Cypress**, I have to admit my favorite is the *Carya* or Hickory genus. Commonly known as, “The **Spoon Wood** tree;” some of the most abundant species here are the **Mocker Nut** and **Pig Nut**, (*C. tomentosa* and *C. glabra*). Even though the nuts are edible for humans and non-humans alike, the main feature for me is their 50-60 ft maximum height shade tree capacity.

Another favorite is the unfamiliar **Beach Plum** tree, (*Prunus maritima*). Though it is found along the dune systems of the east coast, the species has been recently discovered as a novelty in the agricultural community and it may be listed as the next small fruit from NJ alongside blueberries and cranberries.

The species is a native and a true dwarf variety of plum found only in



Beach Plum



Mockernut

North America. The species actually have a four-season interest. The indigenous wildlife likes the fruit as well as the short tree-shrub like protection during the winter months. The autumn color display is just as striking as the different shades of plum of the ripened fruit.

What plant is next on my list? I'll be honest, I have too many that should be next but this one moves me for the white/pinkish leaves and red seed pods of its autumn display: *Euonymus atropurpureus* or the **Eastern Wahoo**.



Eastern Wahoo

This understory shrub, with its thin green, winter twigs and small purple almost holly-like flowers in the spring, makes this plant one of my best landscape choices for an understory planting anywhere. The seeds alone are also a bit of a contrast, looking more like a magnolia than the bittersweet family. So, if you are into the unusual don't overlook this little beauty.

Just one last thought, go and surprise yourself. Look for that hidden gem.

Tune In: NPSNJ Launched a New Podcast!



By Kim Correro *Hudson Chapter Co-Leader*

In *The WildStory: A Podcast of Poetry and Plants* by NPSNJ, art and nature intercept to bring listeners voices from the worlds of poetry and ecology. The podcast is produced by Dr. Ann E. Wallace, the poet laureate of Jersey City, and Kim Correro of the Hudson Chapter.

"We invite people to slow down, observe the world around them more closely, sink into its rhythms and mysteries, and reflect on what role we wish to play in the environment," Wallace says. A recurring theme is that when we shine a lens on life, through a smartphone camera or the language of poetry, we are likely to respect, care for, and even love that which we are seeing.

Each episode includes an interview with a poet who writes about the natural world and a second guest who is an expert in native plants and ecology. In the "Ask Randi" segments in between, NPSNJ President Dr. Randi Eckel answers listener questions about the environment.

"People interact with the natural world in all sorts of ways, and native plants run through all of those encounters like a thread," said Dr. Eckel. "The WildStory podcast

weaves together native plants, poetry, and the musings of poets and native plant enthusiasts in what seems to be a new and exciting way."

The featured poets reflect upon the natural world in diverse ways.

"People often think of nature poetry as saccharine or idealized, but the poets we feature ask hard questions and reflect deeply, intimately, about the natural environment and our relation to it," says Wallace. Sati Mookherjee mourns on the shores of the Salish Sea in the Pacific Northwest; Lisbeth White traces genealogies of place and invites us to imagine trees, air, and water as holding the memory of Black ancestors; January Gill O'Neil finds wonder and terror alike in the landscape and waterways of the Deep South; Christine Klocek-Lim hikes local peaks and trails, attuned to the changing landscape; Susan Glass, blind since birth and a devoted birder, locates herself, and her readers, through birdcall.

The WildStory

A Podcast of Poetry & Plants

by The Native Plant Society
of New Jersey



The ecology segments feature professionals from all disciplines of native plants, ecology, gardening, and environmental advocacy. Recent guests have included Jennifer Jewell on the cultural, environmental, and metaphoric meaning of seeds; Edwina von Gal on sustainable design and her Two Thirds for the Birds initiative; Katy Lyness on the joys of botanical illustration; and Kim Rowe on efforts to bring more native plants into local nurseries.

Upcoming guests include Don Torino of the Bergen County Audubon Society; Elaine Silverstein of the Bergen-Passaic Chapter and a lawn reduction advocate; Maryland homeowner Janet Crouch who battled her HOA over native plants and changed state law; author Brie Arthur on living with alpha-gal syndrome, carried by the lone star tick; and John and Susan Landau on the important role of the land steward.

The WildStory is available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Amazon Music, and Google Podcasts.

To submit questions for Randi Eckel or recommend a future guest, please email Thewildstory@npsnj.org.

In order to receive announcements about book promotions, upcoming guests and events related to The WildStory, go to:

<https://npsnj.org/the-wildstory-podcast/>

NPSNJ's Special MEMBERS ONLY Offers:

"Choosing, Planting, and Caring for Native Plants" *A four-session course taught by Elaine Silverstein*



About the instructor:

Elaine Silverstein is certified in Sustainable Landscape Management by the New York Botanical Garden, where she has also earned the Urban Naturalist certificate and continues to study botany, ecology, and landscape design. She maintains a horticultural practice in Bergen County where she advises clients on sustainability, garden design, and

installing and caring for native plants. She is a vice president of the Native Plant Society of New Jersey in charge of chapters and co-leader of the Bergen-Passaic chapter. She lives in Glen Rock, where she is a member of the Shade Tree Advisory Committee and Environmental Commission.

This will be an interactive course on Tuesday evenings in January 2024 from 7:00pm to 9:00pm.

Registration opens Wednesday, November 15th at npsnj.org

Cost: \$60 per person (20 people maximum)

January 9th Session 1,

Introduction to Native Plants

January 16th Session 2,

Creating a Native Habitat:

Planning & Designing

January 23rd, Session 3,

Creating a Native Habitat: Planting & Care

January 30th, Session 4,

Naturescaping: Landscaping from Nature



By Kim Correro

Hudson Chapter Co-Leader

Questions? Contact: Programs@npsnj.org



25% OFF Jennifer Jewell's NEW Book

"What We Sow: On the Personal, Ecological, and Cultural Significance of Seeds"

From Timber Press

Log into the NPSNJ website to get Coupon code, then click here to order:

<https://timberpress.com/titles/jennifer-jewell/what-we-sow/9781643261072/>

Duration: September 21 – October 31

25% off the cover price;

Free shipping on orders of \$40 or more.

In "What We Sow," Jennifer Jewell brings readers on an insightful, year-long journey exploring the outsized impact on one of nature's smallest manifestations—the simple seed. She examines our skewed notions where "organic" seeds are grown and sourced, reveals how giant multinational agribusiness has refined and patented the genomes of seeds we rely on for staples like corn and soy, and highlights the efforts of activists working to regain legal access to heirloom seeds that were stolen from indigenous peoples and people of color. Throughout the book, readers are invited to share Jewell's personal observations as she marvels at the glory of nature in her Northern California hometown.

"What We Sow" is a tale of what we choose to see and what we haven't been taught to see, what we choose to seed and what we choose not to seed. It urgently proves that we must work hard to preserve and protect the great natural diversity of the seed.

Invasive Plant Replacement Database & Brochure

By Bobbie Herbs

NPSNJ Corresponding Secretary

The Society has produced a list of native plant replacements for invasive plants on New Jersey Senate Bill 8126, scheduled for a vote later this fall. With the prohibition of growing and retail sales of popular exotics that have escaped our gardens, we expect more demand for plants that offer similar values in size, foliage, and flowering from our native plant palette.

Today the list is an excel spreadsheet, but a searchable database is being developed making for an easy search and replace selection. The spreadsheet has a list of all S8126 invasive plants with a description and form. Next to each invasive plant are three native alternatives for varying garden and landscape conditions. The second spread sheet is a list of all native plants referenced on the replacement list with culture details, such as sun, moisture requirements, and environmental benefits. The sources for this data include: Missouri Botanical Garden Plant Finder, Ladybird Johnson Wildflowers.org, and several native plant societies in other states that are also home to plants native to New Jersey. We all know that plants don't know any political boundaries.

The NPS IGC Committee has also created a brochure spotlighting some of these native replacements for a few invasive plants.



If you would like copies of this brochure for your chapter, email, quartermaster@npsnj.org Include your mailing address and quantity needed

Hudson Chapter Update

By Lauren Morse

Hudson Chapter Co-Leader

The Hudson Chapter has had a year filled with educational events, building community connections, and supporting native plant gardens. We began the year in collaboration with the Hudson County Improvement Authority giving away close to 1,000 plugs to promote native plants at a jam-packed Earth Day festival. Our chapter held two major native plant sales for the public and partnered with Rohsler's Allendale Nursery and Well Sweep Herb Farm to bring native plants closer to home and make them accessible to the public. In addition, we launched a series of tree-focused walks with naturalist Cam Kanterman and ventured around the state, hosting outings that included trips to Bowman's Hill and Wild Ridge Plants.

Our co-leaders Kim Correro, Lorraine Freeney, Lauren Morse, and Dawn Giambalvo along with other members have been working relentlessly to expand and maintain native plant spaces throughout Hudson County. This year Eilika Miller of Hoboken stepped up as the head of our steering committee and Sima Kunttas is filling the vital role of social media influencer.

Through the annual fundraiser Hudson Gives, we raised over \$9,000 to support eleven local native plant gardens including Peace Care St. Joseph's Nursing Home, Western Slope Garden, Union City Community Garden,

Hoboken 11th St. Island Gardens, Ferris Triangle Park, James Braddock Park Butterfly Garden and others that have now added hundreds of native plants to these green spaces. We have also installed new native plant gardens in three public schools, including a school for students with disabilities. Through this fundraiser, the



*Asters in Lincoln Park and
Buttonbush from Canco Park*

incorporate more native plants and shrubs along the nature trails of Lincoln Park West in Jersey City.

As important as adding new native plantings is, maintaining them is also critical! With the help of committed volunteers, the chapter has supported efforts to maintain and improve native plant gardens through

Chapter Leaders

Kim Correro
Lorraine Freeney
Lauren Morse
Dawn Giambalvo

Head of Steering Committee

Eilika Miller

Instagram

Sima Kunttas

out Hudson County, including Canco Park, which is the only green space within a 15-minute walk for many residents. We've supported restoration efforts for Jersey City's largest rain garden at Riverview Fisk Park and created pollinator gardens with the local 4-H and Rutgers Cooperative Extension in Jersey City's Lincoln Park and West Hudson Park in Kearny, NJ.

We pride ourselves on the grassroots work we have done to connect private homeowners to the native plant community. We are so excited to keep building on our efforts to make Hudson County more beautiful and sustainable for people and wildlife in 2024.

We will end the year on Dec. 2nd at Well Sweep Herb Farm where we will celebrate and make holiday wreaths made out of various types of pine, cedar, and holly. We hope our members will join us. To learn more follow our chapter's new WhatsApp group and stay notified of our latest news and upcoming events

<https://tinyurl.com/bday6j35>

Essex Chapter

By Deb Ellis



The Essex Chapter hosted a Fall Fest on Sept. 30, 2023.

Over 70 attendees enjoyed guided nature hikes through the woods of the Essex County Environmental Center and 164 native shrubs were sold!

Winterberry Holly, *Ilex verticillata*

John Suskewich
Essex Chapter

By the first week of October, winterberry holly is bringing its bling to the garden.

Ilex verticillata fades into the background in spring and summer when other plants with fetching flowers dominate, but it sure shows off in fall and winter with a lovely display of fruit, most often singularly bright red in the straight species, but with cultivars that also offer drupes in shades of orange and yellow. With few serious pest or disease problems, it is a very useful and beautiful native woody plant.

Canada and the northern U.S. are home ground for winterberry, a deciduous holly growing in the wild at the edge of the woods, often

beside streams or ponds, indicating that in the garden it prefers light shade and can handle moist, acidic soil. Its range is far flung, from up there in Nova Scotia all the way to the U.S. Midwest. Topping out usually around six to eight feet, it can sucker to form a dense colony liberally sprinkled with those colorful berries.

Ilex verticillata is a dioecious species, meaning only female plants have flowers with pistils, only male plants have flowers with stigmas, so to get the vivid berries which are the results of pollination, you'll need at least one of each. Apparently one male plant can fertilize several close-by females. My yard has several male clones, which seem to be pollinating female plants in nearby yards that have none. If you go to a garden center or plant sale to purchase winterberries, having selected a female,

which is likely to be covered in fruit at this time of year, make sure you also get an appropriate beau so that it will crop again in the future. Two common studs are 'Jim Dandy' and 'Southern Gentleman.'

Winterberries are not only beautiful to the human eye but also to the avian palate. Catbirds, mockingbirds, blue jays all find them toothsome. Over the winter a few years ago my neighbors caught a blush of robins devouring the fruit on the plants in their yard right after a snowstorm. Actually, all kinds of wildlife can make a happy meal out of winterberry. During the summer in our shrub border, chipmunks dash up the branches and snack on the fruit while it's still green; maybe they think they're capers or something. For its fall and winter beauty and the support it gives to wildlife, winterberry is an A-list native plant.



Winterberries are not only beautiful to the human eye but also to the avian palate