



**The Native Plant Society of New Jersey**  
**2024 Annual Meeting & Conference**

Saturday, March 2, 2024  
8:00 am – 3:00 pm

Ocean County College  
Gateway Building, Lot 1, College Drive  
Toms River, NJ 08753

<https://npsnj.org/event/2024-annual-meeting/>

**Building Community with Native Plants—for Urban, Suburban, and Rural Landscapes**

Plants, like people, need communities to thrive. Native plants support their communities—their ecosystems—in many ways. They provide food for insects, birds, and other wildlife; serve as host plants for insect offspring; offer shelter; support soil creation; conserve water; and reduce runoff. Thus, a critical way that humans can support ecosystems is by sowing and cultivating native plants. For maximum success in those efforts, there are many factors to consider, from “right place, right plant” to landscaping strategies that communicate intentionality to surrounding human communities. In this conference, expert speakers—Mariellé Anzelone, Toshi Yano, and Sarah F. Jayne—explore those considerations as they apply to urban, suburban, and rural landscapes.

**AGENDA**

8:00 am	Morning coffee, bagels, and muffins
9:00 am	Welcome (this is the start of the Zoom feed)
9:10 am	<b>New York City's Urban Wildflowers and Why They Matter</b> <b>Mariellé Anzelone, NYC Wildflower Week</b>
10:10 am	Coffee break & visiting the information tables
10:45 am	<b>Setting the Stage to Support Biodiversity in Your Own Homegrown National Park</b> <b>Sarah F. Jayne, author, Nature's Action Guide</b>
11:45 am	Lunch & Socializing <i>Attendees who wish to meet people from specific New Jersey counties can choose to sit at a given county's "connection zone" during lunch.</i>
1:15 pm	Plant of the Year Voting, Year in Review, Elections, & Door Prizes
1:45 pm	Break & visiting the information tables
2:00 pm	<b>Making Natives Pop: Cues to Care and Best Practices</b> <b>Toshi Yano, Perfect Earth Project</b>
3:00 pm	Closing remarks
3:10 pm	Event close

**TALK DESCRIPTIONS**

9:10 am **New York City's Urban Wildflowers and Why They Matter**

Mariellé Anzelone, NYC Wildflower Week

Most people think of cities as the absence of nature, especially New York. The Big Apple is famous for its bustling sidewalks, skyscrapers, and pigeons, and yet, it is also home to a surprising diversity of wildflowers, including the globally rare Nantucket Juneberry (*Amelanchier nantucketensis*). Despite its urban facade, the city supports an impressive wild flora: 1,194 taxa with 64% being native species. Join Marielle Anzelone as she shares insights and lessons for home gardeners drawn from over two decades of fieldwork across the forests, marshes, and meadows of the five boroughs. She will also discuss how she cultivated community through public gardens in schools and parks and communicated her passion for urban wildflowers through politics, publications, and radio broadcasts.

## About Mariellé Anzelone

Mariellé Anzelone is an urban ecologist focusing on people's connections to nature & how design, education, and government can nurture this relationship. She is the founder of [NYC Wildflower Week](#)—an organization that produces programming to engage urbanites with the wilds of the Big Apple. Marielle is a regular contributor to [The New York Times](#). She is also advancing local biodiversity policy. [A bill that she helped develop](#), supporting native plants in public landscapes, became law in 2013. [PopUP Forest: Times Square](#): A slice of real nature in the heart of New York City, this lively green space will support wildlife and delight urbanites—and then disappear. Going global for 2022. For nearly seven years she was a Plant Ecologist with NYC Department of Parks & Recreation—conserving, managing and restoring the native flora of New York City. Marielle received an [M.S. in Ecology and Evolution from Rutgers University](#) in New Jersey. She has lived among the plants of the New Jersey-New York metro area nearly all of her life. Home is now Brooklyn, NY, with her husband and two sons, not far from Prospect Park.

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10:45 am

## Setting the Stage to Support Biodiversity in Your Own Homegrown National Park

Sarah F. Jayne, author, Nature's Action Guide

Individually, as we fill our balconies, yards, and fields with native plants, we are creating small parks rich in local biodiversity. Together, we are building an interconnected park that extends across our continent. Dr. Douglas Tallamy, author of [Nature's Best Hope](#), envisions this community effort as the [Homegrown National Park](#), a conservation initiative that aims to restore 20 million acres of native plantings in North America. Our individual Homegrown National Park, the place we call home, is our shelter—our sanctuary. Like oaks and goldenrods, native plant enthusiasts are keystone members of the movement to restore biodiversity. How can we maximize our beneficial impact in this role? The native plants we cultivate attract insects, birds, and other animals. Our sanctuary becomes their sanctuary—their place of refuge and safety. How can we ensure that we truly are providing sanctuary for the wildlife our native plants attract? How do we increase our landscape's ability to provide ecological services that wildlife (and people!) need for survival? How do we welcome others beyond our community to join us in this critical movement toward restoring biodiversity? Let's explore solutions to these pressing issues together, as park rangers for Homegrown National Park!

### About Sarah F. Jayne

Sarah F. Jayne is the author of the upcoming book [Nature's Action Guide](#), a companion to Doug Tallamy's book [Nature's Best Hope](#). She earned a degree in agriculture from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and has worked intensively with plants and wildlife for over four decades. Inspired by Doug Tallamy's [Bringing Nature Home](#) and recognizing the pivotal role each person can play in addressing the biodiversity crisis, Sarah experiments with methods that enable people, regardless of their resources or gardening skills, to support biodiversity where they live. In [Nature's Action Guide](#) she explains in detail how to implement the ideas in [Nature's Best Hope](#) and join [Homegrown National Park](#). This initiative aims to restore 20 million acres of native plantings in the U.S., which represents approximately half of the green lawns of privately-owned properties. This project is considered the largest cooperative conservation project ever conceived or attempted. Sarah lives in Oxford, Pennsylvania.

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## 2:00 pm Making Natives Pop: Cues to Care and Best Practices

Toshi Yano, Perfect Earth Project

The value of native plants is clear to so many of us who garden and manage land, but there's a lingering stereotype about native landscapes—that they're messy, unkempt, disorganized spaces that look more derelict than desirable. While the wild native garden aesthetic may take time to catch on, in the meantime there are simple things native gardeners can do to make natives appealing to their friends, neighbors, and communities. Drawing from his experience as an estate gardener and public horticulture leader, Toshi Yano will share the practices that helped him create exuberant plantings and “legible” spaces while still maintaining the kind of tidy presentation that homeowner associations expect when they use terms like “curb appeal.”

### About Toshi Yano

Toshi Yano is the Director of [Perfect Earth Project](#), a non-profit organization dedicated to educating, engaging, and inspiring individuals to adopt the toxic-free, nature-based, and climate-responsible land care practices necessary for a healthier, more sustainable—and more beautiful—environment for all. He was previously the Director of Horticulture at [Wethersfield Estate & Garden](#) which, during his tenure, received the New York State Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation and The Garden Conservancy's Jean and John Greene Prize for Excellence in the Field of American Gardening. He serves as a Director At Large at the [American Public Gardens Association](#) (APGA), where he chairs the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility Committee, and is a co-founder of BIPOC Hort. Toshi enjoys spending his spare time searching the woods for the smallest, most secret plants, and is the proud father of a sharp-eyed girl who helps him find the especially small, especially secret plants that elude his aging eyes.