



The Native Plant Society of New Jersey, Winter 2025



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Photographs provided by NPSNJ members. Thank you for your contributions.
Cover Photo by Bobbie Herbs

The President's Corner



Dear Friends,

Our 2025 Annual Meeting and Conference is almost here. This year's theme, *From Backyards to Ecosystems: Connecting Native Plant Communities in New Jersey*, highlights the importance of thinking beyond individual landscapes to create connected habitats. With over 85% of New Jersey's land privately owned, every garden, park, and restoration project plays a role in supporting biodiversity. When these spaces link together, they form larger, more resilient ecosystems that sustain native plants, wildlife, and ecological processes.

This year's conference will explore how individuals, communities, and organizations can work together to expand native plant conservation. Our expert speakers—Dr. Doug Tallamy (Entomologist and author of *Nature's Best Hope*), Dr. Linda Rohleder (Restoration Scientist and head of the *Wild Woods Project*), and Dr. Randi Eckel (Entomologist, owner of *Toadshade Wildflower Farm*, and past President, NPSNJ)—will share insights on restoring ecosystems at different scales. Dr. Tallamy will discuss how homeowners can support biodiversity in their own yards, Dr. Rohleder will focus on restoring the understory, and Dr. Eckel will explore the ecological connections that sustain plant and animal communities. We will also

highlight ongoing efforts to expand native plant conservation across the state, including strategies for coordinating restoration projects at different scales. Through shared knowledge and collaboration, both at the local and state level, we can create landscapes that function as part of a larger ecological network.

As we look to the future, NPSNJ remains committed to advocacy, education, and community engagement. Last year, we held our first overnight event at Cape May Point, and we hope to offer another in the northwestern part of the state this year. We are once again awarding over \$20,000 in grants to native plant projects across New Jersey. We are publishing and distributing more than ever and, of course, our Wednesday webinar series has over 50 in-depth videos addressing everything from gardening for bats, caring for trees, starting seeds, to building a vernal pool. We keep our membership costs low because we know times aren't easy, but our success depends on all of you—our members, volunteers, and supporters—who work every day to restore and protect New Jersey's native plants and ecosystems. We do need your help, not just financially—our biggest donor stopped awarding grants in the area last year—but also in your expertise. We need individuals who can help us run this 1,500-



member organization. Grant-getters, scientists, publicists, landscape professionals, writers, editors: it's your chance to make a real difference in making this a Native Plant Garden State.

I hope you will join us on March 1, whether in person or online, as we come together to learn, connect, and inspire action. By working together, we can create lasting change for native plants and ecosystems across the state.

See you at the conference!

Kazys Varnelis, PhD

2025 Spring Annual Meeting and Conference

From Backyards to Ecosystems: Connecting Native Plant Communities in New Jersey

March 1st @ 8:00 am – 3:00 pm

Ocean County College,
Gateway Building,
1 College Dr., Toms River, NJ 08754

Register at:

<https://npsnj.org/event/2025-annual-meeting-and-conference/>

Our speakers will share insights on coordinating conservation efforts across different scales, overcoming barriers to connectivity, and measuring collective impact.



Dr. Doug Tallamy

“How Can I Help? Saving Nature with Your Yard”

Founder Homegrown National Park, TA Baker Professor of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Delaware

Nearly every day I get emails from people who have read my books and heard my talks and yet still have questions about ecological landscaping. These are good, thoughtful questions about ecology and evolution, biodiversity, invasive species, insect declines, native and non-native plants, conservation and restoration, residential and city landscapes, urban issues, oak biology, keystone plants, Homegrown National Park, monarchs, supporting wildlife at home, and more. In this talk I address as many of these queries as I can with hope that my answers will further motivate people to help restore ecosystem function where they live, work, play, worship, and farm.



Dr. Linda Rohleder

Growing Native Plants for Restoration Projects

Founder, Wild Woods Restoration Project

The understory is a crucial component of forest ecology. Volunteers with the Wild Woods Restoration Project are growing native plants for restoration efforts in local parks across the Hudson Valley. By using local ecotype seeds, they are helping to preserve the region’s genetic diversity and restore habitats in these parks. Dr. Rohleder will explain how the project organizes volunteers to grow plants at home and will discuss the concepts and challenges they face with local ecotype seeds and sustainable growing practices. Since 2022, the project has engaged over 300 volunteers and cultivated tens of thousands of plants. This initiative highlights the powerful impact volunteers can make through collective action.



Dr. Randi Eckel

Past President, Entomologist, and VP Membership, NPSNJ

Owner, Toadshade Wildflower Farm

What is your connection footprint? Every living thing relies on connections to other species – and our connections to those species, both great and small, are critical to their survival and the survival of entire ecosystems, starting in our own backyards. Oaks and mosses, aphids and butterflies, hummingbirds and hawks – they all have a role to play in the great web of life. Randi will discuss the overlooked, the understudied, and the importance of even the finest threads in the food chain. She will cover lessons learned from species lost in the past, current challenges, and hopeful paths to the future that rely upon us and the actions that we can take, together, in our gardens, fields, and forests, to protect ecosystems for generations to come.

NPSNJ Advocacy Highlights and a Look Ahead



By The Advocacy Committee

The Advocacy Committee of NPSNJ is proud of its work to advocate for the protection of native plants and the broader environmental health of New Jersey. Here's a look back at the key activities the committee has been involved in over the past year and the exciting progress we've made.

ANJEC Conference: Tree Removal/Replacement Ordinances

In 2024, for the first time, NPSNJ had a booth at the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) conference, where our own Russ Furnari presented on the [Tree Removal/Replacement Ordinances](#) now required under the MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems) permits that are issued to municipalities by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). In many municipalities, the tree lists included in those ordinances are much too narrow to meet biodiversity needs, and further, don't address the use of natives rather than non-natives, exotics, or invasives.

Continuing the Push for a Bill to Ban Invasive Species in NJ

Following the governor's January 2024 veto of the bill to ban the sale of invasive plant species in New Jersey, NPSNJ has continued to work with a group of stakeholders, including both conservation groups and the nursery industry, to get a revised bill passed. The bill ([S1029/ A4137](#)) was re-introduced into the current legislative session and NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Shawn LaTourette committed publicly to getting a revised bill passed.

In early January of this year, the DEP submitted a substitute version of the bill, which gives the DEP greater authority over the bill's implementation. At a hearing on January 13, the NJ Senate Committee on the Environment and Energy agreed to advance the new version of the bill. Multiple steps remain, including proceeding through the Assembly committee process and passage by the full Senate and Assembly, but it now seems promising that the bill could get over the finish line before the legislature goes into recess in July.

New Jersey League of Municipalities Conference

NPSNJ's Advocacy Committee also had a booth at the New Jersey League of Municipalities (NJLM) conference—another first for NPSNJ—where we connected with policymakers and local leaders from all over the state to discuss how municipalities can better integrate native plant preservation into their planning processes. Our participation at this conference provided an important platform to promote environmental policies that support biodiversity, native vegetation, and sustainable land use practices.

Looking Ahead with New Committee Leadership

As we begin 2025, the NPSNJ Advocacy Committee remains committed to the mission of protecting native plants and advocating for policies that promote sustainability and biodiversity. This year brings new leadership to the committee, as Laura Bagwell is stepping up to replace Laura Bush as co-chair, who will stay on as a regular member. Russ Furnari, who became a co-chair last year, will continue in that role. The team is excited about the work ahead. We also thank you for all that you do to advocate for the use of native plants and support of biodiversity.

Partner with Nature: NPSNJ Announces New Members-Only Spring Online Classes

By Kim Correro,
NPSNJ State Programs

For questions about the classes, email programs@npsnj.org



The Dirt on Native Plants

This garden design course will explore how growing these plants can benefit your yard, your wallet, and wildlife.

March 6th 6:00-8:00 pm

\$125, four weeks. CEUs available

To sign up go to:

[The Dirt on Native Plants](#)

Instructor: Jason Goldman,

Owner of Flower to the People

The course will delve into ecology and highlight native species and cover techniques for container gardening, and thoughtful strategies for keeping neighbors satisfied.



Botanical Watercolor Illustration for Beginners

April 17th, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

\$125, four weeks,

To sign up go to:

[Botanical Illustration](#)

Instructor: Lianne Pflug,

New Jersey illustrator with fifty thousand Instagram followers and a client list including Hudson Valley Seed Company. Beneficial to artists, gardeners, and naturalists, this class includes basic drawing and painting techniques as well as instruction on how to meticulously observe plant structures and characteristics.



A Homage to Wood: Native Trees, Shrubs and Vines for New Jersey and the Mid-Atlantic.

March 4th, 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

\$160, four weeks, CEUs available

To sign up go to:

[Homage to Wood](#)

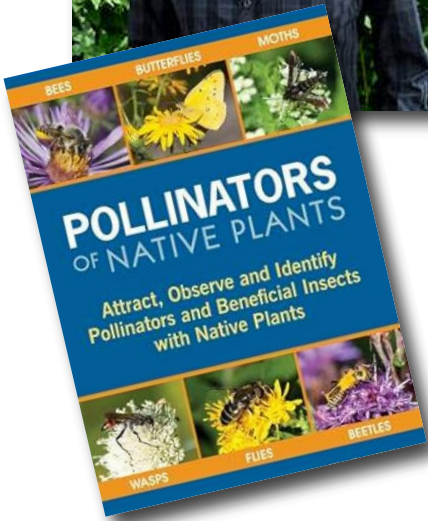
Instructor: William Cullina

Author and Otto Haas Executive Director of University of Pennsylvania's Morris Arboretum.

The first three sessions will be an in-depth profile of regional native woody plants appropriate for various conditions and uses. Each section will follow with a discussion of climate-adapted species from the Piedmont and Coastal Plain ecoregions we might consider adding to our horticultural repertoire. This class will cover cultivation, propagation, pruning, soil structure and chemistry of plants and their communities. The final session will introduce native ferns, grasses, and sedges and cover ecology, propagation and cultivation of mosses. For the novice to experienced gardener.

Partner with Nature: NPSNJ Announces New Members-Only Spring Online Classes

By Kim Correro,
NPSNJ State Programs



Biology of Native Bees and Predatory Wasps. Interactions Between Native Pollinators and Native Plants

Tuesday, April 1st 7:00-9:00 pm
\$125, four weeks

To sign up go to:
[Native Bees](#)

Instructor: Heather Holm
Award-winning author and pollinator conservationist, featured in the *New York Times*.

It will feature specialist bees and native predatory wasps, focusing on interactions between pollinators and native plants.



Natural History of Birds: A Workshop for Advanced and Beginner Birders

March 31st 6:00-8:00 pm
\$125, four weeks

To sign up go to:
[Natural History of Birds](#)

Instructor: Ken Chaya
Urban naturalist, known for his map and digital app documenting Central Park's twenty thousand trees and his role in NYBG's Urban Naturalist Certificate Program. The class will address the relationship between birds and native plants. Students will learn how to look at a bird critically, practicing how to see details and recall them in the field. Whether you are an experienced birder or a beginner, this course will sharpen your skills.



Introduction to Botany

Tuesday, April 29th 6:00-8:00 pm
\$125, three weeks

To sign up go to:
[Introduction to Botany](#)

Instructor: Clara Holmes
Plant Ecologist with NYC Parks, with a decade of experience in plant community monitoring and conservation. Through engaging lectures, students will explore plant structure, basic identification skills, and plant community ecology. You'll learn how to recognize important plant structures, how to use field guides and tools like dichotomous keys for accurate plant identification, some common plant families, and how to view plants as a community.

All courses have a maximum capacity of thirty people. Pre-registration is required and will be announced on NPSNJ's website, social media, and emails. Further information can be found at npsnj.org/upcoming-programs. For questions, email programs@npsnj.org.

Explore Manitoga: The Russel Wright Design Center Tour

By Kim Correro,
NPSNJ State Programs

Friday, May 16th, 2:45 PM -5:45 PM.

Join us for a delightful afternoon with NPSNJ President Kazys Varnelis as we explore the beautiful Manitoga estate and the Russel Wright Design Center!

This is NPSNJ's first expedition to a site just outside our state's borders that is teeming with native plants and shows how one of America's most cherished designers created a landscape in harmony with the native plants of our region.

Come and soak in the amazing spirit and wonderful design vision of Russel and Mary Wright, who transformed an old quarry into something truly special. Midcentury designer Russel Wright created the famous American Modern line of dishes. Their home, Dragon Rock, a National Historic Landmark, is tucked away in the lovely forested woodlands of Garrison, NY, above the Hudson River.

Landscape Curator Emily Phillips and Landscape Manager Kathryn Tam will begin with an introduction to the Wrights' Woodland Garden in Mary's Meadow, amidst the blooming dogwood trees. Visitors will then ascend stone steps to pass through the Laurel Field along the Killalemy Trail, experience a picturesque stream crossing, and pause at the Sunset Osio to admire the Hudson River view before descending to tour the House, Studio and the Russel & Mary Wright Design Gallery.



NPSNJ President, Kazys Varnelis, who taught as an architecture historian for many years at Columbia University, will also be there to talk about the role of landscape in midcentury modern architecture.

A light spread with wine and charcuterie will be served just outside the main House along the Pergola, which is covered in native Dutchman's Pipevine. Guests can observe Manitoga's majestic Waterfall and Quarry Pool, with access to the outdoor Terraces and the Lower Beach Room at the base of the Waterfall surrounded by cascades of spicebush.

The cost for this adventure is \$150.00 per person. There is limited availability, and a waitlist will begin once the event is full.

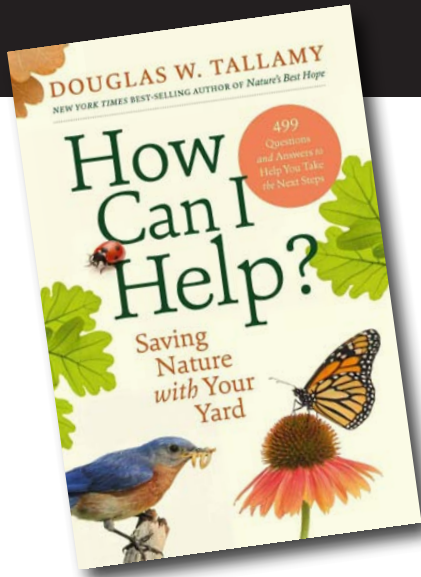
If you have questions, email programs@npsnj.org.

Registration opens for members on Feb. 28th



Book Review: “How Can I Help?

Saving Nature with Your Yard”



How Can I Help? Saving Nature with Your Yard,

By Doug Tallamy, PhD

376 pages

2025 Timber Press,
Portland, OR

By Kim Rowe

NPSNJ Monmouth

Chapter Leader

If you think you have heard everything that Doug Tallamy has to say, you may be surprised by his newest book, *How Can I Help? Saving Nature with Your Yard*. The book answers 499 questions from fans of his earlier publications. Tallamy has devoted his recent life to encouraging this kind of interest, and answers as many questions as possible personally.

How Can I Help? is vintage Tallamy and yet something completely new. It is the equivalent of Restoration Ecology 201, a next-level college course that more fully explores the concepts presented in Tallamy’s

earlier books and it’s a big step up in complexity. During a recent book-signing, Dr. Tallamy was asked how many researchers he had working with him on *How Can I Help?* His wife, Cindy, quickly responded, “No, no, that’s all coming from his head!” And with characteristic modesty, Dr. Tallamy said,

“Native plants support the life that runs the ecosystems that support us. Plants from other continents do not.”

“Well, I have been working on these things for more than 40 years.” But while most of the answers come from Tallamy’s deep foundation of knowledge, it’s all firmly rooted in science. He states, “When my answer is just my opinion, I say so.” His responses reflect the latest advancements in scientific knowledge, “honed over the years by the scientific method.”

In a time when science is facing more doubters than Galileo did when he posited that the world was not flat, it is comforting to read Tallamy’s words about scientific methodology: “It’s important to remember that science is a process—the process of hypothesis testing. It is not someone’s opinion or belief. A scientist asks a question, restates it as a hypothesis, and accepts or

rejects that hypothesis based on the results of that experiment.” Dr. Tallamy’s scientific knowledge clearly shows in his writing, but he communicates in a straightforward, accessible, and folksy style. It’s a comfortable continuation of the “favorite uncle” approach of his earlier books, when Tallamy first convinced so many of us to plant native plants. Once again, he empowers each of us to take up our shovel and save “the little things that run the world.” He spurs us to: reduce our lawns, leave our leaves, plant keystone species, and stop enticing insects into white lights. If we do all that and convince our neighbors and friends to do the same, we can revitalize local diversity and enhance our ecosystems instead of further degrading them. What makes Tallamy so appealing is his ability to conjure hope in a time when the world feels like an apocalypse is near. He tells us that the panic we feel about climate change and diversity loss is real but can be mitigated by personal action: we can make a meaningful difference by planting the right plants in our yards and public spaces. In doing so, he gives us the control that we need to feel safe.

How Cooper Launched Candide's Garden

By Jon Gibbons,
Monmouth Chapter

*Founder of Candide's Garden and
Creator of Patchwork for Wildlife*
candidesgarden1761@gmail.com
Website: www.candidesgarden.org

In April 2001, dressed in my best bib and tucker, I knocked on an East Baltimore Street door to introduce myself to Meg, a "wonderful young woman my age." She opened the door, but a black Lab/Beagle mix got to me first. I handed Meg the bunch of fresh-picked English Bluebells and dropped down to give her dog a pet and a cuddle. This was Cooper, your basic dog. Years later, Meg said this was the moment she fell in love with me.

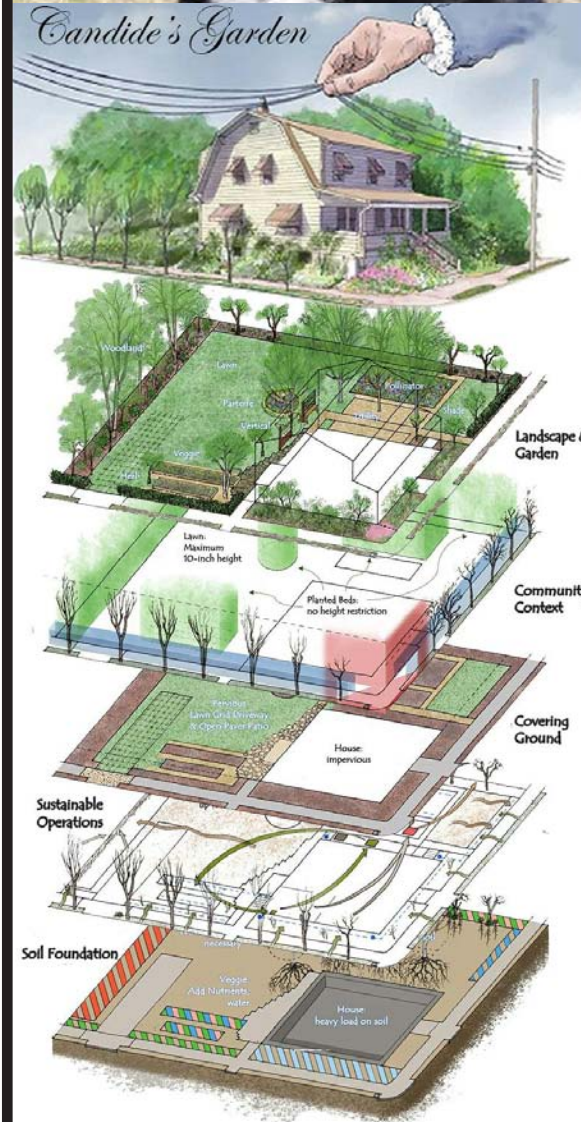
Now together, we were planting one of everything, from Bluebells and Greengage Plum from my 25 years in England, to the 5-in-1 Apple, Phlox, and Chrysanthemums remembering my postman Father's acre in Wall, to a Pussy Willow and Tart Cherry, to honor relatives. Interrupting our quiet weekends here though, were Cooper's necessary morning and evening walks. His freedom to roam the yard was now our goal. A plastic fence wouldn't do: I was learning about plastic, not to mention the cost. We installed a discreet wire fence, and then, to screen the fence, we started intensive planting along the borders.

When I retired here in 2011, it became clear that I was on to something. The confluence of my increasing knowledge of native plants and pollinators and wider environmental issues, along with the variety of plants already there, suggested that others could benefit from our efforts. The shaping up process began: the different fruit trees

planted ten feet apart along the long edge developed into the Orchard Border. The scruffy undeveloped area along the back, already planted with Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*), Dogwoods (*Cornus florida*), and Mountain Laurels (*Kalmia latifolia*), grew into the Woodland Border, complete with a winding brick path for kids. The lonely Blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*) shrubs and Raspberry (*Rubus idaeus*) canes along the side street were augmented with another eight species to become the Berry Border; in Spring the kids could pick their own. Cooper's work here was done.

Meanwhile, mowing along the 30-degree slope along the side and front was just too onerous. My Son and I dug it up, intending to plant. The turf grass had kept the soil sandy and dry. So, the Bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*) and Beach Plum (*Prunus maritima*) at the back founded the Shore Border, to be joined by Smooth Sumac (*Rhus glabra*), Groundsel Bush (*Baccharis halimifolia*), Coastal Azalea (*Rhododendron atlanticum*).

Candide's Garden opened in 2017. Cooper, then Meg, had long passed; their imprint remains. The Garden represented not only a result, but a process that could parallel other's journey to transform a conventional yard to one in tune with the environment. In 2021 we started a program that supports and recognizes a homeowner's efforts at each stage. This would involve us in more ongoing work, but it is a basic premise of the Patchwork for Wildlife – incrementally creating a significant arc of eco-beneficial landscape – one yard at a time.



2025 Plant of the Year Nominees- Backyard Herbaceous Perennial Plants

By Kathy Trarbach
Hunterdon Chapter

Eastern Columbine, *Aquilegia canadensis*

Love hummingbirds?
The columbine, with its bell-shaped orange and yellow blossoms, is one of the first perennials welcoming hummingbirds back in mid-April.



The flowers also support butterflies, bees, and hawk moths and bloom for about a month. The leaves host the columbine duskywing caterpillar. The plants, which are only 1-2 feet tall, self seed readily and will spread. Do not plant them with non-native columbines if you don't want them to cross. The scalloped leaf mound usually remains attractive all summer and can be used as a groundcover in a lightly shaded area.

Wild Geranium, *Geranium maculatum*

The wild geranium is also called cranesbill, due to its pointed seed capsule that resembles a crane's head. With its pink to purple flowers, the neat 12-28 inch mound bears its blossoms on the tips, creating a showy border. This easy-to-grow plant blooms for about a month starting in late spring. Bumble and solitary bees as well as syrphid flies are the most common pollinators, and it has no serious insect or disease threats.



The foliage will stay neat all summer if watered; if it yellows, it can be cut back. Geraniums can be propagated by dividing the rhizomes or collecting seeds. In the wild, it prefers part shade, but will grow in sun if moist enough.

New England Aster, *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*

As one of the keystone plants necessary for supporting pollinators late in the year, the New England Aster is a star. Growing in full sun and blooming from late summer to mid-fall, its purple flowers with yellow centers beckon to many bees and butterflies. The foliage also hosts the caterpillars of the pearl crescent and Gorgone checkerspot butterflies and the wavy-lined emerald moth. This plant tolerates clay soil, rain gardens, and likes slightly acid soil. Although it ranges from 3-7 feet tall, cutting it back in mid summer will encourage fuller, shorter growth. Maintaining airflow around it will reduce its susceptibility to powdery mildew.



Bloodroot, *Sanguinaria canadensis*

One of the first spring plants to bloom is bloodroot, found in woodlands and floodplains. The flower stem emerges wrapped cozily in a leaf, which continues to grow as the flower emerges. Evolving in conjunction with ants, the bloodroot's seed has developed a fatty appendage (*elaiosome*) that ants relish, so they trundle the seeds back to their nest, consume the elaiosomes, and drop the seeds into their waste pile, effectively planting them. It's a win/win situation! The plants behave like ephemerals, emerging before tree leaves do, with their foliage dying off by summer. The name comes from the reddish caustic sap and rhizomes. Growing in clumps, the plants' 2-inch white flowers cheerily signal the end of winter.



2025 Plant of the Year Nominees-Rare and Special Plants

By Irene Sabin
Hunterdon Chapter

American Ginseng,

Panax quinquefolius is has small, greenish-yellow flowers, five lobed leaves and a longish root that may be forked. Fruits are clusters of red berries producing seeds that remain near the main plant population.



The seeds require a long period of double stratification to be viable. Growing conditions are best for American Ginseng in the areas of eastern American hardwoods where the following flowers bloom: Cutleaf toothwort, Bloodroot, Trillium, Trout Lily, and Spicebush. American Ginseng thrives best in shady areas with only 8 to 30% of direct sunshine. This member of the Aralia family was almost over collected to extinction by herbalists in the colonial period. It is considered a rare plant in New Jersey.

Witch Hobble,

Viburnum lantanoides is a deciduous shrub growing to a height of twelve feet in the cool moist woods of the eastern US. Outer branches hang downward until they touch the ground and take root. The shrub can form thickets but transplants easily. "Witch" hobble comes from the Middle English word, "Wyche" meaning pliable and flexible, like the outer branches, and "hobble" refers to the unexpected roots that may hobble hikers. Flat-topped flowers bloom white in May and June. Small fertile flowers are surrounded by a necklace of large infertile ones whose sweet scent is thought to attract pollinators to the inner circle. Drupes of black, green, purple, and red berries adorn the branches after blooming, and fall foliage glows gold, bronze, red, and purple.



Twinleaf,

Jeffersonia diphylla, bears an attractive spring wildflower with 8 white petals above a straight, wiry stem. The stem has a basal leaf that looks like two kidney-shaped leaves but is one leaf indented into two lobes, which gives the plant



its common name of twinleaf. The flower petals start to drop as soon as the flower blooms, but the foliage persists into fall. An interesting aspect of this flower is a pear-shaped dehiscent seed pod with a lid which springs open to release its seeds when they are ripe. To collect the seeds, a small envelope must be attached to the seed pod before the lid opens. Although native to the eastern U.S., this plant is more often seen in gardens than in the wild. Genus name honors Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), President of the United States, plants man and patron of botany with a deep interest in horticulture.

Large Flower Trillium,

Trillium Grandiflorum is lank and leggy with a "whorl" of ovate leaves (bracts) unfurling around its single, stout stem. Large blooms emerge white or pink in March or April. LFT prefers part to full shade in humus-rich, well-drained soil. Seedlings take two to three years to develop their triple leaf structure and may take seven years from seed to mature bloom. Seeds form in berry-like fruit capsules and are dispersed by ants and ground-nesting wasps like yellow-jackets. A mass planting also spreads slowly by rhizomes. In addition to attractive flowers, LFT provides nectar for early native and honeybees, acts as a larval host for some moth species and provides cover for small mammals. Deer love to eat trilliums. The Trillium genus comes from the Latin word trilius, meaning "triple," because the bracts and flower parts are normally in threes.



Going Native Guide Is Now Available in Spanish



“It took a lot of time and research to find the common names of the plants in Spanish, compare bibliographies, and choose the most widely used names.”

By Kim Correro
*NPSNJ Spanish Language
Outreach Committee*

Fifteen months ago, a small group consisting of members from NPSNJ, Barnegat Bay Partnership’s Jersey Friendly Yards Program, Ocean County College, and Friends of Foote’s Pond Wood came together with an idea: to translate *Going Native: A Guide to Landscaping with Native Plants in Northern New Jersey*, the most widely used educational guide among NPSNJ chapters on caring for native plants, into Spanish. The Northern NJ Guide was originally created by John and Susan Landau of Foote’s Pond Wood and Deb Ellis, Essex chapter of NPSNJ in 2021.

John Landau, also from the NPSNJ Morris Chapter, is playing an integral role in restoring Foote’s Pond Wood Park in Morristown, NJ. He’s been a dedicated advocate for translating the guide into Spanish because the park is near Thomas Jefferson Elementary School, which serves students in grades 3-5 and their families. John noted, “The Morris School District is about 45% Hispanic. Kids are our future, but for many students, English is a second language, and it’s important for them to understand sustainable landscaping, even if they don’t engage with it directly.”

Carla Rodrigo Herrera, an environmental engineer and Rutgers Environmental Steward, volunteered to lead the translation project. When asked about the challenges of translating such an extensive document, Rodrigo Herrera remarked, “It took a lot of time and research to find the common names of the plants in Spanish, compare bibliographies, and choose the most widely used names. I found it very helpful to collaborate with Laura Bush, who I

consider a mentor and who is a native English speaker.”

Bush, an NPSNJ volunteer, freelance science writer, and Spanish-to-English translator, reciprocated the compliment. “This translation was a big undertaking, and Carla did an amazing job preserving the incredible detail of the original document,” she said. “Once the document was laid out, it was a bit tricky to ensure that the Spanish corrections we marked were clear to the graphic designer Michael Leon, who doesn’t speak Spanish. It took several rounds of corrections to get everything just right!”

Free copies of *Going Native in Spanish* will be available to the public at the Spring Annual Meeting on March 1st. Be sure to pick up your copy. “Hispanic people make up 26% of New Jersey’s population, said Landau. “Learning about sustainable landscaping can be challenging for everyone. We must ensure language isn’t an extra barrier to this valuable knowledge.”

Upcoming 2025 NPSNJ Wednesday Webinars



By Bobbie Herbs
*NPSNJ Wednesday Webinars
Committee Co-Chair/Founder*

Wednesday Webinars remain a mainstay in our statewide efforts to showcase native plant, conservation and other related experts from within New Jersey, NPSNJ and beyond our state. We have held 45 webinars, as of our last event, which featured “The Art & Science of Seed Starting” with Randi Eckel, PhD, NPSNJ Entomologist and Membership Vice President.

We hope you will mark your calendar on the third Wednesday of each month, excluding July, August and December. We start at 7PM sharp, letting our speakers present for 60 minutes followed by Q&A.

Upcoming Webinars:

March 19th

“Weeds as Workhorses” with Ethan Dropkin

Controlling weedy native plants can consume an inordinate amount of time and resources. It can match the effort needed to deal with some of the worst invasive species. However, not all native species commonly labeled as weeds are equally problematic, and some species can become welcome additions to the garden or managed landscape. This talk will cover what causes some natives to be viewed as weedy and how a reframed viewpoint can reveal their beneficial characteristics.

April 16th

“The Cotyledons and Beyond” with Joe Alvarez

You probably remember hearing the term monocot or dicot at some point in your gardening adventures. Maybe from a field guide, a garden catalogue or magazine, which even listed some directions on how to grow microgreens. It is one of those curious tidbits of plant information (or science) that makes you feel like there should be more to the story. Well, I think there should be too. Come, explore with us and find out more about cotyledons and beyond.

Since our first Wednesday Webinar on June 10, 2020, we have reached 16,618 attendees offering scientific and experiential information and education about native plants. Starting during the COVID lockdown, then President, Hubert Ling, and his executive committee determined outreach, and education must continue while the chapters were inactive.

May 21st

“Plant Survival Strategies: Using Grime’s Triangle to Create Resilient Gardens” with Jared Barnes, PhD

Why do certain plants flourish and others falter? The answer lies in plant strategies. Join Dr. Jared to uncover how “Grime’s Triangle” helps you blend site conditions, species choice, and garden management into one cohesive system. This class will empower you to make informed decisions that support native biodiversity, reduce maintenance, and create thriving ecosystems.

June 18th

Michele Bakacs will share information about invasive plants. Details to follow.

Pollinator Days 2025 Events' Kick Off



By Bobbie Herbs
NPSNJ IGC Committee Co-Chair

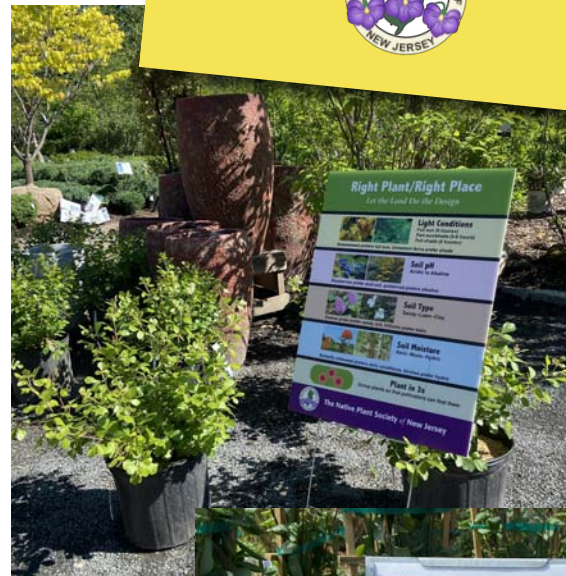
We are kicking off the Pollinator Day event planning for 2025 and want to invite all of you to consider being part of this Independent Garden Center [IGC] Committee program.

Last year we held ten Pollinator Days across New Jersey. Straight species native plants are the focus of the program. We offered education to both consumers and garden center employees about the benefits of native plants. Materials are available, from posters to handouts to presentations, featuring why to use native plants and how to choose the right plants to support native bees and butterflies.

Pollinator Days were originally designed in response to the constant refrain from native plant gardeners, "I can't find the native plants I want at my local garden center." Not only did we address this concern, we discovered that numerous garden center customers wanted to get started on their own native plant journey but didn't know how.

Our NPSNJ liaisons worked closely with IGCs to arrange educational programs, suggest discounting, and help customers with plant selections. We will be holding a liaison meeting soon. Get involved, there's lots of work to do, and it's fun!

If you want to get involved contact Kim Rowe and Bobbie Herbs at GrowJerseyNatives@npsnj.org



NPSNJ Somerset County Chapter News



By Valerie Szkodny
and Nancy Toro
*Somerset Chapter
Co-Leaders*

Our chapter had a busy January. We began with a presentation by Jared Rosenbaum from Wild Ridge Plants on “Rare Plants and Primary Forests of the Sourlands” on the 9th at the Montgomery Township Building. This was a collaboration with the Sourland Conservancy, Somerset County Parks Commission, Montgomery Township, and the Somerset, Hunterdon, and Mercer chapters of the Native Plant Society of NJ. There were 85 people who came out on a cold winter evening to take advantage of the table event prior to the presentation, where 8 organizations had set up to share information and network with each other and the attendees. 127 people registered for in-person attendance out of 124 open seats, and 176 people registered for online attendance out of 200 open seats.

Video of the presentation is available at
<https://montgomerynj.new.swagit.com/videos/325451>

Later in the month, we held a winter-sowing series at the Environmental Education Center (EEC) in Basking Ridge.

The first of the two-part series was on January 13th, in which 11 people participated. It highlighted 5 different methods of sowing perennials in a hands-on experience using milk jugs, small square trays, recyclable containers, plastic bags, and cardboard nursery boxes. Chapter outreach projects will benefit from the plants that were sown.

We had 9 people participate in the second part of the series, held on January 17th. It demonstrated several methods for sowing seeds and acorns in a “Trees and Shrubs” workshop.

Again, participants learned many hands-on methods using deep trays, plug trays, plant tubes, and small pots. The EEC nursery will benefit from the trees and shrubs that were sown. Handouts and seeds at both workshops were provided so participants could experiment at home using any method of their choice.

NPSNJ Morris Chapter News



The Morris County chapter of the NPSNJ has launched a free native seed library.

By Amy DiPalma,
Brianna O'Hallaran,
& Megan Stypulkoski
Morris Chapter Co-Leaders

Spring fever comes early for gardeners, and if you're one of the growing number of Americans interested in native plants for your garden, you're in luck! **The Morris County chapter of the Native Plant Society of NJ has launched a free native seed library.** Nestled right inside the Boonton Holmes Public Library, the seed library offers an extensive collection of native, open-pollinated plants that are harvested locally and are suited to a variety of growing conditions.

The rapid urbanization of Morris County combined with the spread of invasive species has been detrimental to our native flowers and the many animals who depend on them. Adding native plants to your garden is an impactful way to help bolster biodiversity loss. Not only do native plants provide food and shelter for pollinators, but they have deep roots that prevent soil erosion, reduce stormwater

runoff, and increase drought tolerance. Many are perennial and will continue to delight your gardens year after year.

There are many benefits to going native in your garden, so be sure to stay up to date on our upcoming educational events by following [@npsnj_morris](https://www.instagram.com/npsnj_morris) on social media, or be the first to know by becoming a member of the Native Plant Society at www.npsnj.org and signing up for our newsletter. Upcoming events include winter sowing, winter tree identification, and more!

Now is the time to sow your native seeds.

The Boonton Holmes Public Library is located at 621 Main St, Boonton NJ.

The library's website is www.boontonlibrary.org. Be sure to visit during their open hours. Please take no more than three packets per visit, and only take what you will grow.

The Power of Native Plants to Build Community

By Monica Cardoza,
Member of NPSNJ Bergen-Passaic Chapter

The Celery Farm Nature Preserve is a 107 acre freshwater wetland in the Bergen County town of Allendale. Yes, celery was once grown there. But today you won't find vegetables. You will find Porcelain berry vines choking trees, stretches of Japanese stiltgrass, and stands of Multiflora rose, Autumn olive, and Oriental bittersweet.

That is, you once found massive amounts of these invasives. Thanks to volunteers, the preserve is transforming into a showcase for habitat restoration. From a little over a year ago when a crew of about 15 began removing invasives to today with almost 100 people from retirees to high school students, volunteers have been working to remove invasives.

They've saved hundreds of native shrubs and trees by removing decades worth of vines and phragmites choking Black walnut (*Juglans nigra*) and Cherry trees (*Prunus serotina*), Red maples (*Acer rubrum*), and Silky dogwoods (*Cornus amomum*). They removed hundreds of Autumn olive shrubs from around the pond, and pulled Mugwort from the meadow.

Where Porcelain berry once thrived next to Lake Appert is the new East Side Native Plant Garden. Volunteers have set up temporary deer fencing and planted some one thousand native perennials. They collected hangers donated by local dry cleaning businesses, and created small flags with colored duct tape to identify the plants. An open house in July attracted some 50 visitors touring the garden and learning about native plants from volunteers.

You'd think the momentum would fizzle out. To the contrary, people keep showing up. In one year, some 72 volunteers put in 2,300 hours. In December alone, volunteers racked up 420 hours.

As Programs Chair for the preserve, I asked the two volunteers heading up the restoration effort to give a presentation at our January meeting. To a packed room, Frank and Christian Alcaide discussed how it all started and where it's headed. You can find the recorded presentation, **From Invasives to Natives**, by visiting <https://fykenature.org/> click on *Programs*, then *Past Presentations*.

It's grassroots movements like this that will grow the native plant community—in this case, from a nature preserve to backyards and beyond.



Flag	Plant	Qty
Orange	Blue Woodcock	100
Green	Flaxweed	100
Red	Blackberry	100
Blue	Red Worm	100
Yellow	Blue Star Flower	100
Pink	Joe Pye Weed	100
White	Common Milkweed	100
Light Blue	Blue Lobelia	100
Light Green	Eastern Bluebird	100
Light Purple	Mountain Mint	100
Light Orange	Black Chokeberry	100
Light Yellow	Winterberry	100
Light Red	Grounded Tree	100
	Grand Total	1000

East Side Native Plant Garden Key

The area between Lake Appert and the Allendale Brook that is a short distance north of the Pirie-Mayhood Tower was overgrown with invasive Autumn Olive shrubs until the fall of 2023 when a team of Fyke Nature Association volunteers systematically removed them by the hundreds, digging them up by the roots. This area was replanted with deer resistant native species in the spring of 2024. They are enclosed by a temporary deer fence until the plants get established.

Notice the small colored flags distributed throughout the area. Each color corresponds to a different plant. The flags identify the species as shown in the color-coded table.

Interview with Ann Wallace, the NPSNJ WildStory Podcast Host & Producer

By the NPSNJ State Programs Committee

Who can listeners look forward to learning about in season three of *The WildStory* Podcast?

We've kicked off the season in Black History Month by celebrating historical Black gardeners and poets. We spoke with Abra Lee, Director of Horticulture at the historic Oakland Cemetery in Atlanta, whose forthcoming book *Conquer the Soil* honors the lives of African American growers. We also spoke with descendants of two Harlem Renaissance poets and gardeners: Shaun Spencer Hester is the granddaughter of Anne Spencer and Executive Director of the Anne Spencer House and Garden Museum in Lynchburg, Virginia, and Jerri Mitchell-Lee is the great niece of Effie Lee Newsome, author of a delightful children's poetry collection, *Gladiola Garden*. Kim and I are proud of how this episode came together to highlight the impact of these people.

Who are some of your most memorable guests?

Oh goodness, that's a hard question. We've had so many phenomenal guests. It was an absolute delight to interview poet Ross Gay on my birthday for Episode 11, which also featured a unique interview with the brother-sister duo Margaret and Billy Renkl, about *The Comfort of Crows*.

As for poets, truly everyone on the show has offered a new way of putting art and nature together. It's hard to pick favorites. Some poets trace difficult land-based American histories in their work. Others find healing of body and soul in nature. Others still find peace or joy through the natural world, even in this Anthropocene moment. I am moved by each guest.

You've talked with numerous native plant experts. What is the most valuable information you've learned?

A message we hear regularly is that it's okay to start small with native plant gardening. Tallamy's



Homegrown National Park is the perfect illustration of this—even people who live in a city, like I do, can add native plants to their balconies or small spaces. If you have a garden, you can replace non-beneficial plants with native plants on a budget and timeline that's manageable for you. The key is to get started and go from there.

What is it like behind the scenes creating each episode?

I'll be honest—the podcast is a tremendous amount of work! Kim and I spend hours planning, securing guests, and preparing for each interview. I devote a full day to preparing for each poet interview, and Kim does the same with the guests with whom she takes the lead. Then we edit the interviews ourselves—I just spent more than eight hours editing a 30-minute interview! We take our time because we want our guests to shine. Kim uploads each episode, which is another significant task. We each have full-time jobs, families, and other professional and volunteer commitments, so it really is a labor of love.

The WildStory

A Podcast of Poetry & Plants



Shaun Spencer-Hester
Executive Director & Curator at the Anne Spencer House & Garden Museum



Jerri Mitchell-Lee
Author & great-niece of poet Effie Lee Newsome



Abra Lee
Author & Director of Horticulture at Oakland Cemetery

Interview with Ann Wallace, the NPSNJ WildStory Podcast Host & Producer

Continued from previous page

Could you tell us about the Wildstory team?

The WildStory is 100% a volunteer effort, so I am grateful for everyone's commitment. First, I need to thank my co-host and co-producer Kim Correro. She is a tireless force whose mind is always whirring with new ideas. We make a really good team, and I love working with her.

Randi Eckel is the expert behind our advice segment, Ask Randi. She is a fount of knowledge and I adore how she infuses her wry wit into her responses to listener questions. I love tuning in like everyone else and learning from her.

Our behind-the-scenes team includes sound editor Lynn Berry, who compiles the audio files Kim and I prepare, adds the music, opener and closing credits, and makes each episode sound good. Bobbie Herbs creates our promo cards for posting on social media and online. Both Bobbie and Lynn are pros who produce beautiful work. Publishing each episode to the NPS website is another small achievement, and Bill Thorne manages that aspect for us. Most importantly, I want to thank the NPSNJ Executive Board for trusting us to create this show on behalf of the organization.

If you could talk to any nature poet, who would it be?

Ha! That's a trick question--the poet I want to speak with is always the poet whose work I most recently read! Thanks to The WildStory, I've been able to do that twenty times now. But I'll offer two names: one living and one deceased. I would be honored to speak with Ada Limon, Poet Laureate of the United States, who created the *You Are Here* project, installing poems in natural areas in every state (a book of the same title grew out of this project). When I was in Provincetown, Massachusetts last fall, what a surprise it was to stumble upon one of the You Are Here picnic table installations, with a poem by Mary Oliver inscribed on it at the head of a nature trail.

And my other pick is Mary Oliver, who is most known for her years in Provincetown. I grew up in a small town at the base of Cape Cod, so the landscape in Oliver's work is very familiar to me. And her New England can-do sensibility is one I deeply relate to. Mary Oliver was at the town dump searching for cedar shingles when she learned she had won the

Pulitzer. That so fully resonated with me—the treasure hunting at the dump, the do-it-yourself home repairs, the fact of wood shingled houses, all of it!—I had to write a poem, “Cedar Shakes,” about it.

The WildStory will host a live event in collaboration with the Nature of Reading Bookstore at the Education Annex of the Museum of Early Trades & Crafts in Madison, NJ on March 13th from 7 to 8 p.m. Can you tell us about it?

This is our second live event with these wonderful partners. Kim and I will interview Paula Whyman about her new book, *Bad Naturalist: One Woman's Ecological Education on a Wild Virginia Mountaintop*. Paula bought 200 acres in Virginia and embarked on a daunting restoration project. We can't wait to learn about this massive undertaking. Please join us on March 13th, and tune in when Paula joins us next month on The WildStory.

We will continue to expand the range of voices as we work together to protect the environment—so be sure to follow us on Instagram

[@TheWildStory_Podcast](https://www.instagram.com/TheWildStory_Podcast).

Anne Wallace's Website:

<https://www.annwallacephd.com/>

Other Podcasts on Native Plants

Shared by Bill Young, NPSNJ Ecologist

“Native Plants Healthy Planet”, January 17, 2025. *Ecological Ramblings with Mike McGraw*.

Native Plants, Healthy Planet Podcast - Apple Podcasts

“Bringing Back Atlantic White Cedar” with Bob Williams. October 25, 2024
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/bringing-back-atlantic-white-cedar-with-bob-williams/id1500442697?i=1000674421331>



photo by Kathy Trarbach

Wild Eyed Radical

Sometimes...
people look at me
as if I'm one
my wild eyes
twinkling
like the morning star
with a focus
on the natural...
as in my yard
wanting it returned
to wilderness
draw in wildlife
create a micro-forest
a miniature refuge
as grand as Forsythe...
make it tough
to find my door
surround myself
with lush jungle
become again
what I was meant
to be... and
keep my wild eyed
wide open view
looking ahead
to rewilding
the collective land
as it once was

Hara L. Rola 2023