Wild Ones
NATIVE PLANTS, NATURAL LANDSCAPES
SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA CHAPTER

January 2022 Newsletter

January Meeting Highlights

Chapter Business: Chapter membership has increased to 96. Our membership ranges across southeastern Pennsylvania and into Delaware, Maryland, and New Jersey, all part of the same ecoregion.

Presentation: "**How Plants Grow: What Every Gardener Should Know About Botany**," by Marc Radell, PA Master Gardener. Marc teaches the basic principles of botany to improve native plant gardening practice.

- Plant identification: most plants in our gardens are flowering plants. Exceptions include ferns and mosses. Make sure you recognize the seedling stage of your plants, so you don't weed them out by mistake.
- Botanical names: a genus is a group of similar species. A species describes plants that are basically the same. Varieties are distinct subgroups within a species. Cultivars are varieties that have been bred for certain traits. Hybrids result from breeding two or more species together. Hybrids sometimes occur naturally but are usually created by plant breeders.
- Germination: Water, temperature, oxygen, and often light combine to prompt a seed embryo to start growing. Some seeds can remain viable for decades. Viability can depend on storage conditions. Use fresh seed and pay attention to the germination rate to determine how much see to sow.
- Woody plants are the bones of a landscape.

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Recordings of this and earlier meetings are available on our youtube channel.
Visit us on Instagram and Facebook.

Thought of the Month

For 2022, we will be highlighting a different native tree each month. January's tree is the sycamore. *Platanus occidentalis* is a large canopy tree growing 75 to 100 feet tall with a spread wider than its height when growing in the open. It has beautiful exfoliating bark in white, green, and tan. The white bark of mature sycamores is easy to spot in winter.

Thriving in wet lowlands, creek banks, and lakeshores, sycamores are a beacon leading you to the water. They grow in course sandy and gravelly loams to moderately fine sandy and silty clays and can tolerate poor drainage. With shallow, fibrous roots, they are easily transplanted bare root or ball and burlap in spring or fall.

Flowers are yellow- green and emerge in small clusters in late May to early June. The large, palmately lobed leaves (resembling a hand with spread fingers) make sycamores easy to identify. Sycamores are deciduous, but their brown, curled leaves hang on through December, along with their small, globular fruits.

Companion plants include sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), northern catalpa (*Catalpa speciosa*), poplar (*Populus deltoides*), black willow (*Salix nigra*), river birch (*Betula nigra*), silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*), pin oak (*Quercus palustris*), boxelder maple (*Acer negundo*), swamp white oak (*Quercus bicolor*), spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), Virginia sweetspire (*Itea virginiana*), winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), and summersweet (*Clethra anlifolia*).

Sycamores are hardy to zone 4a and can live 350 years or more.

Several notable sycamores in the area are listed here.

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Place them thoughtfully; they are larger and more difficult to move. Their impact on light, moisture, and soil organisms affects the plants that grow around them. Woodies have the largest wildlife benefits because of the volume of plant material per square foot.

- Some herbaceous plants complete their growth cycle in 1 year (annuals), some in 2 years (biennials), and some live longer (perennials).
- Annuals invest their energy in flowers and seeds. They can have a longer bloom season, may self-sow (so watch out for seedlings the next year), and are prone to be crowded out by perennials, which are designed to replace annuals.
- Perennials invest more energy in developing root structure, usually have a shorter bloom time and a longer life span than annuals, and can become overcrowded as they mature. They are harder to move but may need to be divided every few years.
- Perennials are hardy within their native range. When growing perennials in pots, choose plants that are 1 to 2 zones more cold-hardy because pots provide less insulation than the ground.
- Plants grow by forming new cells and by elongating and thickening their existing cells. Growth is controlled by plant hormones. Pruning affects how the growth hormones move through the plant. Removing part of a stem or branch causes the bud immediately below the cut to start to elongate. Animal browsing and weather also prune plants.
- Tree cells thicken in response to movement from wind, strengthening the trunk. Staking a tree too tightly restricts this effect and causes a weak trunk.
- Growth responses include phototropism (moving toward light), thigmotropism (growth stimulated by touch), and gravitropism (growth in response to gravity). Other growth influences include day length and growing degree days.
- Plants and their co-attendant insects evolved together in their ecoregion, which includes temperature, precipitation, and day length. Native plants growing in their proper ecoregion require less maintenance and provide more support to wildlife.
- Plants manufacture food via photosynthesis. Fertilizer provides supplements, not food. Plants burn sugars produced by exposure to sunlight and water.
- Transpiration is the movement of water through a plant from roots to leaves. Plants can wilt from lack of water, or from too much water, if saturated soil prevents oxygen from reaching the plant to conduct respiration. Disease that prevents transpiration can also cause wilting.
- Reproduction -- in seed-bearing plants, pollen fertilizes the plant's ovary to produce seeds. Pollination can take place via wind, water, insects, or animals. Some flowers can self-pollinate; others require pollen from another flower or another plant of the same species. Some species have male and female flowers on separate plants. Both are required to produce fruit and seed. 80% of flowering plants are pollinated by animals, mostly insects.
- Sexual reproduction promotes genetic diversity in the species, as opposed to vegetative reproduction (cuttings, divisions, tissue closing). The disadvantage of vegetative reproduction is the lack of genetic diversity to combat disease and climate change.
- Decomposition of plants recycles nutrients stored in the tissues. Soil pH can affect the availability of certain nutrients. Native plants that have evolved with local soil organisms are better able to absorb these nutrients and don't need additional fertilizer. Good soil structure creates conditions for microorganisms to survive;. Avoid soil compaction and disturbance.
- In nature, soil is covered with leaves, branches, and bark, which decompose to provide nutrients and protect soil from drying out. Maintain this level of organic matter under your plants. Bare soil is an invitation to weeds and invasives.

Links to resources and Marc's presentation are here.

Website Updates

Native Plant Shopping Guide

With spring planting season around the corner, check out our list of local and mail order nurseries that sell native plants.

Winter Seed Sowing

January is the perfect time to start seeds of many native perennials that need a period of cold weather to break dormancy. Gather your materials and follow these step-by-step directions to start dozens of perennial plants for spring and summer planting.

Wild Ones and Two Thirds for the Birds Unite To Promote Native Landscaping

The national Wild Ones organization has partnered with Two Thirds for the Birds to promote the use of native plants in landscapes.

Two Thirds' mission is to restore dwindling bird populations, which it advances by educating and encouraging gardeners and landscapers to use at least 70% native plants in their gardens while avoiding pesticides.

Northern flicker feeding on berries of eastern red cedar.

Our backyard songbird populations are declining dramatically. Two major contributors to the problem are loss of habitat and the use of pesticides, which kill the insects that birds depend on. Our birds have fewer and fewer bugs and berries to eat, no cavities for nesting, and no thickets for protection from predators.

What you grow in your yard can make all the difference. We can be the solution by changing the way we garden. Our residential, ornamental and recreational landscapes can provide sufficient habitat to restore the bird population. If we could plant even half of our 40 million acres of lawn with two-thirds native plants and keep them pesticide free, we could turn the bird losses into gains.

Two-Thirds yards are full of life. Yours can be, too. You can help save the birds with a simple commitment to plant native plants and stop using pesticides. You will hear the difference!

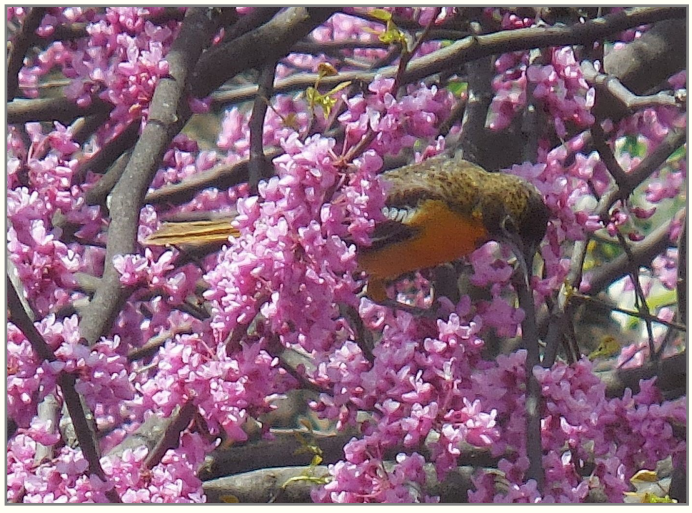
Make a simple commitment today: plant 2 native plants for every 3 and don't use pesticides.

Looking for a Meaningful (and Fun) New Year's Garden Resolution?

Pledge to rewild your corner of the world. This initiative by the Wild Seed Project aims to meet the challenge of biodiversity loss head-on by restoring a minimum of 70% of native plant biomass to support healthy populations of butterflies, bees, birds, and insects that are crucial to a functioning ecosystem.

When you pledge to rewild, you receive regular guidance and tools from the Wild Seed Project to aid your rewilding process, including further explanation of these 10 rewilding action steps, adapted from Doug Tallamy's book *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard*:

- Plant trees that support local food webs
- Shrink your lawn
- Fill every open niche with a wide diversity and abundance of plants
- Target specific pollinators to support
- Change your maintenance regimen
- Add wildlife-friendly features to your site
- Stop fertilizing or spraying pesticides
- Remove invasive plants
- Join forces with your neighbors
- Educate your local civic associations



Baltimore orioles' spring migration in our area coincides with the bloom of redbud (Cercis canadensis), which provides an early source of food.

Plant This Not That Each month we will offer a guide to substitutions for various common nonnative ornamental plants that have become invasive, including trees, shrubs, climbers, groundcovers, perennials, slope stabilizers, foundation plantings, and plants for pots. Nonnative invasive ornamental plants easily escape residential gardens and colonize our woods, fields, and wetlands, displacing and altering native plant communities, and degrading wildlife habitat and water quality.

You can help reverse this degradation by replacing nonnative invasive ornamentals with native plants. This month, we focus on native shrubs whose leaves, flowers, berries, nuts, and seeds provide food and habitat for insects and birds.

You can find more information on native alternatives to nonnative invasives on our website.

Instead of This Nonnative Shrub	Plant This Native Shrub
Berberis thunbergii (Japanese barberry) - brilliant red fall foliage	**Itea virginica (Virginia sweetspire)** - fragrant white spring flowers , long-lasting brilliant red to purple fall foliage **Rhus aromatica (fragrant sumac)** - red to purple fall foliage and red berries (female plants)
Buddleia (butterfly bush) - fragrant purple or white flowers all summer, rampant annual growth, spring maintenance required to keep growth in check	**Clethra alnifolia (summersweet)**- fragrant pink or white summer flowers, good fall leaf color, low maintenance **Fothergilla gardenii (witch alder)**- fragrant white spring flowers, good fall leaf color, very low maintenance **Viburnum dentatum** - white spring flowers , blue or black fall berries, good fall leaf color, very low maintenance
Eleagnus umbellata (autumn olive)/Eleagnus angustifolia (Russian olive) - tiny fragrant white spring flowers, red or olive-green berries in fall	**Myrica pennsylvanica (bayberry)** - semi-evergreen foliage, waxy silver berries (female plants) **Rhus typhina (staghorn sumac)** - red fruit, brilliant red fall foliage **Corylus americanca (American hazelnut)** - fall nuts
Euonymus alatus (winged euonymus, burning bush) -- bright red fall foliage and red berries	**Itea virginica (Virginia sweetspire)** - fragrant white spring flowers , long-lasting brilliant red to purple fall foliage **Aronia melanocarpa (black chokeberry)** - fragrant white spring flowers, black fruit and brilliant red fall foliage **Physocarpus opulifolius (ninebark)** - white or pink flowers early summer, red fruit, colorful peeling bark
Forsythia x intermedia - bright yellow spring flowers, no fall color, very fast growing, maintenance required to keep growth in check	**Lindera benzoin (spicebush)** - pale yellow spring flowers, red berries (female plants), bright yellow fall foliage **Hamamelis vernalis (Ozark witch hazel)** - fragrant yellow early spring flowers, yellow fall foliage
Nandina domestica (heavenly bamboo) -- red berries and foliage in fall	**Aronia melanocarpa (black chokeberry)** - fragrant white spring flowers, black fruit and brilliant red fall foliage **Rhus aromatica (fragrant sumac)** - red to purple fall foliage and red berries (female plants) **Ilex verticillata (winterberry holly)** - red berries fall/winter (female plants)
Lonicera mackii (bush honeysuckle) - white summer flowers, red berries in fall	**Ilex verticillata (winterberry holly)** - red berries fall/winter (female plants) **Aronia arbutifolia** (**redchokeberry)** - white spring flowers, red fruit and brilliant red fall foliage
Spirea japonica (Japanese spirea, bridal wreath) -- sprays of pink or white summer flowers, no fall color	**Clethra alinfolia (summersweet)** - fragrant pink or white summer flowers , good fall leaf color, low maintenance **Spirea splendens (rose meadowsweet)** - fragrant pink flowers all summer **Spirea tomentosa (steeplebush)** - pink flowers all summer

Events in the Community and Beyond

Events

- Feb 25-27 -- Philly Home & Garden Show, Expo Center, Oaks, PA. Don't miss the Wild Ones SEPA table!
- Apr 23-24 - Lancaster Native Plant & Wildlife Festival, more information to be announced.
- Apr 18-May 2 -- Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy Native Plant Sale on-line advance ordering
- May 7-8 -- Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy Native Plant Sale, Peter Wentz Farmstead, 2030 Shearer Rd, Lansdale, PA

Educational Opportunities

- Jan 7, 14, 21, 28, Feb 4, 11 -- Tending Nature Series: Native Plants and Every Gardener's Role in Fostering Biodiversity. Webinar; free.
- Jan 12 -- Inviting Biodiversity into Our Garden. Session I -- Selecting & Sourcing Plants to Create Ecologically Vibrant and Resilient Gardens. Western Reserve Land Conservancy. Webinar; free.
- Jan 20/21, 27/28 -- Expanding the Scope of Landscape Design: People, Ecology, & Time. Webinar; fee.
- Jan 25 -- Monarch Butterfly Conservation Webinar Series. Join Monarch Joint Venture each month at 2 p.m. to explore the latest in monarch conservation topics. Free.
- Feb 16, Mar 7, 14, 21 -- Ecology-Based Landscape Design: An Intensive 4-Session Course. Fee.
- February 23/24 -- Ecological Landscape Alliance Virtual Conference. Fee.

Wild Ones Members

- North Creek Nurseries spring plant order. See the box below for details.
- Apr 14 -- Home Garden Tour, Doylestown, 1:30. Email wildonesofsepa@gmail.com to register.
- May 19 -- Designing with Native Plants, tour and talk by Ethan Kauffman at Stoneleigh Garden, Villanova, PA. 6 p.m. Email wildonesofsepa@gmail.com to register.

Support WILD ONES with your membership

Wild Ones of Southeastern Pennsylvania supports landscaping with native plants in residential, business, and public settings by providing information, encouragement, enthusiasm, and examples of natural landscapes that restore native habitat.

You can support this mission by becoming a Wild Ones member. Go to the Wild Ones website to join or renew on line. When you join or renew, select **Southeastern Pennsylvania** as your chapter.

WO-SEPA 2022 Meeting Schedule

Feb. 10: Invasive Plant ID & Management
Mar. 9: Shrink Your Lanw
Apr. 7: Edible Landscapes
May 4: How To Design and Plant Your Home Landscape
June 9: Specialist Pollinators
July 6: To be announced
Aug. 11: Native Plant Guilds for Four-Season Interest
Sept. 7: Native Trees for Your Home Landscape
Oct. 13: To be announced
Nov. 9: Native Shrubs for Four-Season Interest
Dec. 1: Collecting Native Seeds

Wild Ones Members' North Creek Nurseries Spring Plant Order

Maximize your spring planting with flats of perennial plugs from North Creek Nurseries. Members can email their orders to: SecretaryWildOnesSEPA@gmail.com. Orders are due **by April 15.** Please include the following information:

- Complete name of plant as it appear on the North Creek AVAILABILTY list, including size (LP32, etc.). Make sure the plants you're ordering are available on or before April 25.
- Quantity of FULL FLATS you are ordering.
- No Excel clips or attachments please.

Price will be calculated once the order has been finalized. Pickup is scheduled for April 28 in Pottstown. There may be additional pickup locations, depending on how many flats are ordered.

Not a member of Wild Ones? Join Wild Ones now to take advantage of this and other members-only opportunities this year!