

The Turk's Cap

The Newsletter of the Delaware Native Plant Society

Spring 2026 Volume 29 No. 1

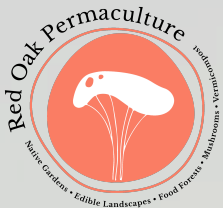
DNPS Mission Statement:

Founded in March 1998, we are a volunteer-based, publicly supported 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of native plants and their natural habitats through education, science, advocacy, and land stewardship.

Discover more at <https://delawarenativeplants.org>



Letter From Our President



The "Native Plant Times"

Red Oak Permaculture



A Potpourri of Native Plants in Springtime



Do More with Native Plants!

President: Eric Wahl Vice-President: Rick Mickowski Treasurer: Eric Zuelke Secretary: Emma Johnson

Letter From Our President

Eric Wahl

As the days lengthen and the chill of winter softens, we welcome the quiet, hopeful arrival of spring across Delaware's landscapes. This is a season of renewal, when woodlands, meadows, and wetlands begin to stir with life once more. For those of us who cherish native plants, spring offers a special kind of magic—subtle at first, then unfolding in waves of color, texture, and vitality. It is a reminder that even the smallest and briefest blooms play an essential role in the greater ecological story.

Among the most enchanting signs of the season are our spring ephemerals—those fleeting woodland wildflowers that emerge, bloom, and fade before the forest canopy fully leafs out. Though their presence is brief, their impact is profound. These plants provide critical early-season nectar and pollen for native pollinators just awakening from winter dormancy. Their life cycles are finely tuned to the rhythms of our local ecosystems, making them both resilient and vulnerable—treasures that depend on intact habitats and thoughtful stewardship.

As we celebrate this vibrant season, let us renew our commitment to protecting and planting native species in our own landscapes and communities. Whether by preserving woodland areas, incorporating native plants into our gardens, or simply taking time to observe and appreciate these ephemeral wonders, each of us can contribute to a healthier, more connected environment. Spring reminds us that beauty and resilience often come in small, fleeting forms—and that by supporting native plants, we help ensure these moments return year after year.

Eric Wahl

President, Delaware Native Plant Society

Visit us at <https://delawarenativeplants.org/> and on [Facebook](#)

Donate [HERE](#) or [HERE](#)

Circle photographs

Lilium superbum - Turk's cap lily

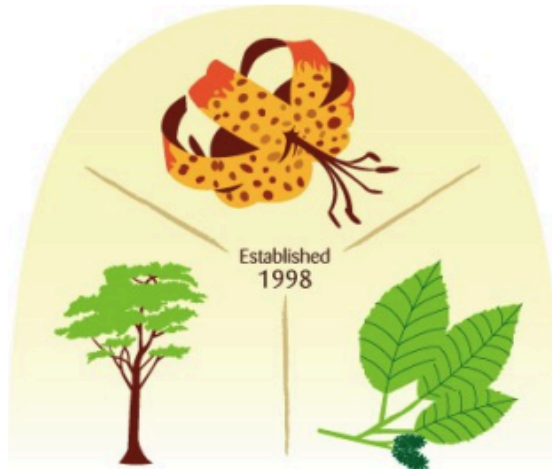
Quercus rubra silhouette- Red Oak Permaculture's Logo

Sanguinaria canadensis - bloodroot

Lilium superbum - Turk's cap lily

Photographs courtesy of David G. Smith at www.delawarewildflowers.org

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



DELAWARE
Native Plant Society

Levels

-  Student\Individual
\$2.00\Month - \$24.00\Year
-  Family
\$3.00\Month - \$36.00\Year
-  Business
\$5.00\Month - \$60.00\Year
-  Reforestation
\$10.00\Month - \$120.00\Year
-  Lifetime
\$500.00 - One time

Membership benefits include:

-  Our quarterly newsletter-*The Turk's Cap*, and website resources
-  Tips and tricks on gardening and landscaping with native plants
-  Annual workshop, symposium, and project work days

Member Information

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Full Mailing Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

If you prefer to use a check, please make payable to:

Delaware Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 369
Dover, DE 19903

If you prefer to use our online method with a credit card or cash pay app, please click on the link below:

[DNPS Online membership](#)

The “Native Plant Times”

The latest native plant news

DNPS Spring Workshop & Annual Meeting

Where? Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge

When? Saturday April 11th, 2026

What?

- 10AM Guided Garden Maintenance- Help the Friends of Bombay Hook!
- 12PM Annual Meeting with
 - Potluck Refreshments
 - DNPS Officer Elections

Favorite Forager- [How to repurpose knotweed in a traditional & delicious way!](#)

Old Country Gardens in Wilmington is “[saying goodbye](#)”

The Pinelands are in danger! [Help maintain native plants in our sister state!](#)

Plants & Grants- [Research on tick prevalence associated with invasive plants](#)

Protecting our Wetlands - [Why they're important and how regulations help](#)

Small spaces- only have a patio but want native plants?

An adorable “nativar” option- [Kalmia ‘Little Linda’](#)

University of Delaware [Plant Sale Catalog](#) is available now! Spotlight on Viburnums!

[Diversity and agriculture](#)

[Neurodiversity and nature](#)

[Project Ground-Nesting Bees](#)

[So much more!](#)



Red Oak Permaculture: Cultivating Living Landscapes in the Mid-Atlantic

Joshua Wells



Red Oak Permaculture is a small design and installation company based in South Jersey. Our work focuses on helping homeowners transition portions of their landscapes from conventional lawn and ornamental plantings into spaces that are more productive, ecologically functional, and rooted in the plants of our region.

Many of the projects we work on combine native plant gardening with permaculture design principles. Permaculture provides the framework for understanding how a property functions as a system. We look at things like water movement, sunlight patterns, existing vegetation, and how people actually use the space. Native plants then form the ecological backbone of those designs, supporting pollinators, birds, and soil life while being well adapted to Mid-Atlantic conditions.

Our work ranges from native perennial gardens and pollinator plantings to larger food forest installations, wildlife habitat gardens, ponds, and rainwater harvesting systems. In many cases, the first step is simply replacing sections of turf grass with layered plant communities that offer seasonal interest while also contributing real ecological value.

One thing we spend a lot of time thinking about is how to make these landscapes feel intentional and welcoming within a suburban setting. Structure is important. Defined garden beds, pathways, and well placed shrubs help create a framework that allows more naturalistic plantings to feel integrated rather than overgrown.

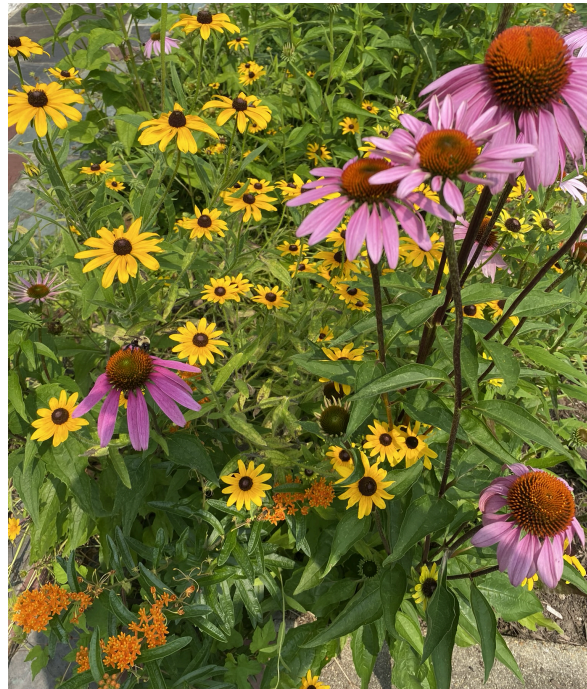


Some of the plants we return to again and again are species that provide multiple benefits. American elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*) [pictured above] is a favorite for its pollinator friendly flowers and its berries, which are valued by both birds and people. Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*) is another excellent shrub that offers spring flowers, glossy foliage, striking fall color, and nutritious fruit. Native grasses such as little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) and switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*) are also staples in our designs because they provide structure, habitat, and winter interest.

A core idea in permaculture is stacking functions. Rather than choosing plants for a single purpose, we look for species and landscape elements that serve multiple roles at once. A well designed planting might provide habitat, food, soil improvement, and visual interest at the same time.



Ultimately the goal of Red Oak Permaculture is simple. We want to help people create landscapes that feel alive and connected to the place where they live. Even small changes, like adding a few native shrubs or replacing a strip of lawn with pollinator plants, can create meaningful habitat while giving homeowners a deeper relationship with their land.



For more information, please visit redoakpermaculture.com

Editor's note: I saw their sign and simply had to ask!



A Potpourri of Native Plants in Springtime

Photos and Article by Pamela Crowe

When I was growing up in northeastern Pennsylvania, my mother instilled in me a love for the wildflowers that grew in the woodlands and farmlands surrounding us. I didn't know the natives from the nonnative plants. It didn't matter; I loved them all. Now, with some knowledge of ecology, I may admire certain nonnative plants, but the native plants give me joy, especially the ones that flower in spring.



Galearis spectabilis (Showy Orchid) Photo courtesy of Carol Spease

This orchid has two glossy, ovate basal leaves. The flower stem rises between the leaves and bears up to 15 flowers. Two purplish upper petals form a hood over the flower. If you come across this beautiful flower, admire it, take a picture and then leave it undisturbed to spread and bloom another year.



Symplocarpus foetidus (Skunk Cabbage)

Skunk Cabbage emerges very early in spring, while snow may still be on the ground. Not to worry—the thermogenic plant produces its own heat. The rounded, reddish spathe acts as a warming hut for the flowers that grow on the spadix (barely visible in the photo) inside the spathe. As the plant matures, huge cabbage-like leaves appear.



Goodyera pubescens (Downy Rattlesnake Plantain)

I first saw this evergreen plant of the orchid family as a young woman walking through woodland on the family farm. As in the photo, it had no flowers, but the bluish-green leaves with the willy-nilly venation reminded me of crazed pottery. I never forgot those leaves. Fifty years later, as an orchid scout, I learned the plant's identity. *Goodyera pubescens* flowers in summer.



Hepatica americana (Round-lobed Hepatica)

Oh, what a striking flower the Round-lobed Hepatica is! I discovered these beauties growing beside a hiking trail in a park. The leaves have 3 rounded lobes, liver-like, that inspired the plant's scientific name, Hepatica. Round-lobed Hepatica springs into bloom, while the dried brown leaves around the flowers decay, sending nutrients back into the soil.



Claytonia virginica (Spring Beauty)

Who wouldn't be happy to see these delightful, dainty flowers in their pink-striped dresses carpeting sunny spots in spring woodlands! Sadly, a nonnative invasive, *Ranunculus ficaria*, has taken over many of the sunny places in the woodland near me, and Spring Beauty has greatly diminished.



Erythronium americanum (colloquially as Dogtooth Violet by the author)

This spring ephemeral, aka trout-lily, makes a good case for using the scientific names of plants. I used "Dogtooth Violet" because that's the name my mother taught me as a child. Its shiny petals and mottled leaves make this member of the Lily Family a standout in springtime woodlands.



Sanguinaria canadensis (Bloodroot)

The Bloodroot in the park by my house appeared on March 23 this year. I like to watch the plants progress as they mature. One flower, one leaf per plant: first, the folded white petals poke up through the ground, followed by the leaf curled around the stem. Next, the flower opens to expose the golden stamens, and the leaf with many lobes unfurls from the stem. The flowers' bright yellow stamens sparkle in the sunlight.



Cypripedium acaule (Pink Lady's Slipper)

The Pink Lady's Slipper orchid takes your breath away every time you see it. These plants should be left undisturbed, because they need a specific habitat. Let's keep them coming back year after year.



Acer rubrum (Red Maple)

Red maple's winged seeds (samaras) fly in the spring winds.



Asimina triloba (L.) Dunal (Pawpaw)

The Pawpaw tree's 1½-inch flowers have 6 petals: 2 rosettes of 3 petals each. The smaller rosette fits nicely inside the larger rosette. The textured, regal-red blossoms that please the eye are followed by common-looking, potato-like fruits that please the palate. The Pawpaw is the larval host to the Zebra Swallowtail butterfly.



DNPS Spring Calendar

● 10AM Saturday, April 11, 2026



DNPS Spring Workshop and Annual Meeting

Join us on Saturday April 11, 2026, for a Spring Workshop at Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge and Annual Meeting.

The event starts at 10:00 a.m. with some guided garden maintenance around the visitor facility as part of our workshop. Afterwards, we will head inside for some potluck snacks and refreshments. (Coffee and tea will be provided by the Friends of Bombay Hook.)

DNPS will present an update on current projects followed up with a discussion with park staff on current happenings at the refuge. We will then hold our annual meeting where members vote for DNPS officers at the conclusion of the event.

This event is **FREE** and open to the public. For questions, please contact Emma Brown at plantearthfire@gmail.com

**DNPS presents
2026 Spring Workshop**

WHAT: 2026 Spring Workshop
WHEN: Saturday, April 11th at 10:00 a.m.
WHERE: Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge, Smyrna, Delaware



CR

● 10AM Saturday, June 13, 2026

Join us at the Marian Coffin Gardens at Gibraltar In Wilmington, Delaware for a guided 1-hour walking tour focusing on incorporating native plants in a formal garden setting, followed by helping volunteer with tidying the garden!

Tour, tools & instruction provided by Liz Allen, Garden Manager. (Tasks may include weeding, pruning, invasive plant removal, and are tailored to the volunteer's needs.)

Do More with Native Plants!

Plant Sales:

- UD Botanic Gardens April 23-25
- Delaware Center for Horticulture April 25
- Delaware Nature Society May 1-2
- Brandywine Conservancy May 8-10

Learning:

- [Flora of Delaware Database](#)
- [Mid-Atlantic Native Plant Directory](#)

Programs and Places:

- [American Fern Society](#) and spore exchange
- [American Horticultural Society](#)- nationwide Garden Network
- & Museum of Art - gift shop sells native seeds with provenance near NCC DE
- Programs and Events, visit Thu-Sun 9AM-4PM
- [Delaware Cooperative Extension & Master Gardener Workshops](#) -Live & Zoom
- [Green Drinks Online](#) Third Mondays Monthly 6:15-7:45PM
- [Wilmington City Council](#) and [Northeast Rising](#) [Wilmington Initiatives](#) at Conscious Connections Urban Farm
- Arden Gardeners Gild events:
 - Saturday May 16 Garden Smarter with Tool Tips
 - Monday April 20 Plant Swap 7:30PM Arden Gild Hall
 - Contact accgardenersgild@gmail.com for more information

Local Native Plant Nurseries:

- [Backyard Wildlife Nursery](#)
- [Behmerwald Nursery](#)
- [Blooming Meadow Nursery in Dagsboro](#)
- [Gateway Garden Center](#) - not strictly native, but a great selection of native plants!
- [Heritage: A Native Plant Nursery](#) - coming soon to Sussex County!
- [Josie's Native Plants](#)
- [Redbud Native Plant Nursery](#)
- [The Naked Oak Tree Farm](#)

Sister Societies:

- [Maryland Native Plant Society](#)
- [New Jersey Native Plant Society](#)
- [Pennsylvania Native Plant Society](#)
- [Delaware Nature Society](#) & [DuPont Environmental Education Center](#)
- [Brandywine Conservancy](#)
- [Delaware State Parks](#)

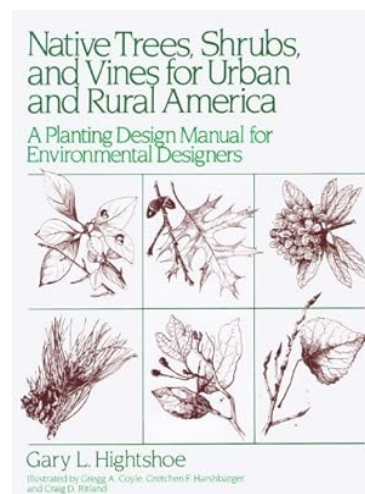
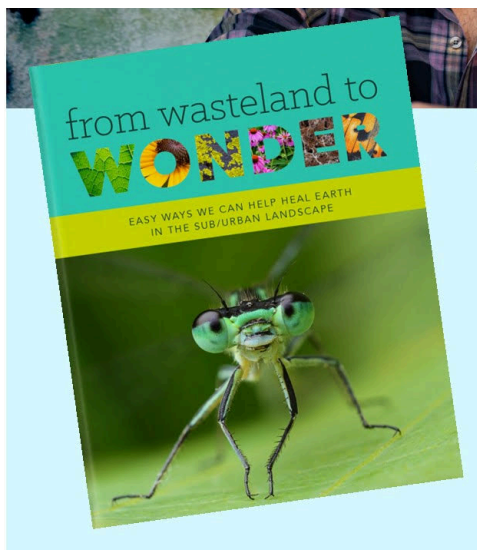
Volunteer Opportunities:

- Herbaria - [Del State](#) Claude E. Phillips Herbarium
- Certifications - [Master Gardener](#), [Master Naturalist](#)
- [Delaware Habitat Guardians](#)

Gardens:

- [Delaware Botanic Gardens](#)
- [Mt. Cuba Center](#)
- [University of Delaware Botanic Gardens](#)

Books:



- [From Wasteland to Wonder: Easy Ways We Can Help Heal Earth in the Sub/Urban Landscape- Basil Camu](#)

- [Native Trees, Shrubs and Vines for Urban and Rural America](#)
- [The Hidden Beauty of Seeds and Fruits: The Botanical Photography of Levon Biss](#)
- [Tiny Worlds of the Appalachian Mountains: An Artist's Journey - Rosalie Haizlett](#)

