



Looking for a hardy rain garden plant to try this season? Check out Golden Alexanders

Jodi Sulpizio, Natural Resources Educator, Master Watershed Steward Coordinator

Z*izia aurea*, commonly known as golden Alexanders, is a low growing perennial (12" to 24") with an early season bloom to brighten your rain garden for several weeks in late spring. The flat, topped yellow flowers (compound umbels) rise on slim stems. The flower clusters can grow 3–4 inches wide. The shiny, compound leaves have toothed margins. The dry seed heads and leaves can turn brown to purple in late summer and autumn, adding interest to the rain garden. I don't recollect that from my small planting but will be on the lookout to take some photos this season. It's a member of the *Apiaceae* (Carrot) family and is a host plant for the black swallowtail caterpillar. The yellow flowers are also attractive to many pollinators. If you have problems with deer, they are deer resistant.

Following are Penn State Extension's site recommendations: allow for Sun/partial shade; moist, sandy, sandy-clay soils; and list a hydrologic zone of wet/moist. It prefers moist soils but will also grow in drier conditions if it gets plenty of moisture in the spring. It is low maintenance and adaptable. If conditions are ideal, it can spread heavily and can create ground cover. If you don't want it to spread too much, you may have to divide and thin as needed. Jean Najjar shared that she planted a few in part shade in a clay soil area of her backyard a few years ago, and they seem to be spreading slowly. And since then, she has transferred some plants to the rain garden in her sunny front yard. She is looking forward to comparing the two sites. As always, she is hoping for each plant to thrive without bullying its native neighbors.

You can also plant it as an accent or border in your rain garden and could add it to a pollinator garden or meadow with adequate moisture.

Photo: Jodi Sulpizio



This June, PNPS will participate in the 6th Upper Delaware BioBlitz. While the premise of a BioBlitz is simple — catalog as many living things as possible in a given area over a 24-hour period — the synergy surrounding the event is anything but! Scientists lead teams of amateur naturalist volunteers, volunteers learn about the plants and animals in an experiential setting, and the landowner gets a comprehensive inventory of all the living resources on their property that can be then used in land planning and conservation initiatives.

The 6th Upper Delaware BioBlitz will take place on property owned by the Highlights Foundation Retreat Center in Boyd's Mills June 28–29th. Teams of researchers will focus on specific categories of life including aquatic macro-invertebrates, birds, botany, fish, fungi, reptiles and amphibians, terrestrial invertebrates, mammals, mosses, and lichens. The organizer, Steven Schwartz explains, "The event is a way to highlight the richness of the environment in which we play, work and live and to help us see our lives in the context of all the other living things with which we co-exist."

The Botany Team will be led by PNPS's Sarah Chamberlain. To be a part of the team, email us at info@panativeplant-society.org. If you'd like to experience the event but don't want to join the team, the public portion of the BioBlitz is Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm.

For more information, go to:
www.upperdelawarebioblitz.com.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Here at the Pennsylvania Native Plant Society (PNPS) we are preparing for another great year across the state. We are grateful for your financial support through membership. We are also grateful for the ways that you advocate for the conservation of native plants and their habitats, increasing the use of native plants in the landscape, and helping to spread the word. Here's some of the

highlights of what we have been up to at PNPS.

We are planning to award \$5,000 in grants this year. In addition to grants for native plant installations in public parks and school gardens we are excited to now award grants to individuals and communities in Justice 40 Areas, communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution. We hope you will take this opportunity to visit our website to learn more and apply.

Our Central PA Native Plant Festival is coming up on May 4th. Last year over 1,200 people attended this incredible event at Millbrook Marsh, and we are planning for an even bigger event this year. You will be able to reserve your plants with many of the vendors beforehand, and we always have a great line-up of educational speakers. Bring your family and neighbors to this free event.

We are continuing to reach out to nurseries and greenhouses across the Commonwealth to participate in our Green Seal Native Plant Pledge. We are highlighting these businesses on our website that sell 1) a majority of native plants, 2) do not sell plants that are treated with Neonicotinoids (a group of commonly used insecticides), and 3) and do not sell any noxious plants. If you know of any nurseries

that might be interested in participating, please put them in touch with us.

Did you know that we have chapters across the state? Would you like to learn more about starting a PA Native Plant Society Chapter in your region? We will connect you with members in your region, help you set up a bank account, give you resources for educational events, as well as financial support. Please e-mail us!

We have been working with local boroughs and municipalities seeking to develop ordinances in support of native plants, their habitats, and banning noxious plants. We have a growing list of model native plant ordinances on our website, as well as other resources for your local township or neighborhood association.

The time is now. We at PNPS are asking for you to support Pennsylvania House Bill 797, legislation mandating the use of native plants in PennDOT plantings across the Commonwealth. House Bill 797, which is currently under consideration in the PA House, would direct PennDOT to plant native trees, shrubs, flowers, and grasses along state-owned highways. Can you imagine?!

Please sign the **Action Alert** on our website to support the legislation. Also, please encourage your local legislators in the PA House to support this bill, and to make it a priority after special elections. Please visit our website for more details regarding all these initiatives.

Thank you once again for all your support and all the work that you do.

Hope to see you at the Central PA Native Plant Festival!

Sincerely,

Andrea Ferich, President

Don't Forget to Renew!

Please be sure to check your membership expiration date above the mailing label. PNPS membership is a bargain, just \$15 for regular annual membership.

Join or Renew online:

www.panativeplantsociety.org/join-us

Or send your check to:

PNPS

PO Box 807

Boalsburg, PA 16827

Be sure to write membership on the memo line of your check. And thanks for your support!

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PNPS Grant Program *There's still time to apply!*

Part of the Pennsylvania Native Plant Society's mission is to encourage other volunteer organizations, individuals, or groups, who believe in the benefits of planting native plants and the important part these species play in our environment. We use our member and donor support to give small grants to groups working on projects focused on outreach, education, and research related to native plants. Categories for 2024 include student projects, native plant installation in public parks (statewide), and native plant installation in public or private spaces in Justice 40 areas.



PNPS will be giving away a total of \$5,000 in grant funding for 2024. Applicants are being asked to create a detailed budget for their project. PNPS expects to select at least one winner per category, however the total number of winners depends on successful applications and amount of funding being requested. You must be a PNPS member to submit a grant application. Winners will be asked to prepare a short report of outcomes (including before and after photos when applicable) for our newsletter and are invited to make an oral or poster presentation for our annual meeting. Student winners and Justice 40 area winners will receive their financial award immediately after decisions are made. The other category, native plant installation statewide, will be reimbursed after submitting receipts. Visit our website to apply for a grant: www.panativeplantsociety.org/grants.html

The applications will be reviewed by a committee and the winners will be notified via email.



PNPS Grant Highlight: Coburn Community Park

The Coburn Park welcome sign greets visitors to our small township park which stands at the confluence of two creeks in the Upper Penns Creek Watershed of the Chesapeake Bay. In 2022, the generosity of the PNPS made possible a diverse planting of Pennsylvania native forbs and grasses in the bed surrounding this sign. With its continuous bloom and acknowledgment of PNPS, the small garden serves to inspire both locals and event visitors toward appreciation of native plants. Now in its third year, the installation continues to adapt and evolve, and to draw interest and attention.

— Review from 2022 recipient Sarah DePasquale

You Can Garden! You Should Garden!

Weekly series presented by PNPS
Schlow Centre Region Library
211 South Allen Street • State College, PA 16801

- **Gardening for the Birds!**
Thursday, March 21 • 12:30pm
- **The Good, the Bad, and the Beautiful:
Who's Crawling in my Garden?**
Thursday, March 28 • 12:30pm
- **Gardening for Life:
The Garden-Wildlife Connection**
Saturday, June 1

For a complete listing of events visit our website:
www.panativeplantsociety.org



Invasive Jumping Worms Threaten Forest and Garden Soil

What you need to know

Michael Skvarla, Assistant Professor
of Arthropod Identification, PSU.

Twenty thousand years ago, most of the Northeast, including one third of Pennsylvania, was covered in glaciers. As the ice thawed, plants and animals recolonized the barren landscape. While native earthworms were, and still are, diverse in the Southeast, only a few forest specialists moved north into newly unglaciated areas. These species are usually associated with fallen trees and restricted to old growth forests. This changed when Europeans arrived in North America in the 1400s and introduced Euro-

pean earthworms through ship ballast and plant material. These new worm species spread throughout North America and are the earthworms that people are most familiar with today.

European earthworms take a year to

There are no effective ways to control jumping worms across large areas, so once they become established in forests there is nothing that can be done about them.

mature and live for four to eight years, during which time they produce 10–50 egg cocoons. This slow life cycle is beneficial in gardens and lawns, where the worms stir up soil as they dig, process decaying plant matter, and speed up nutrient recycling. However, these same processes are disruptive in forest systems that lacked leaf-litter feeding earthworms until a few hundred years ago. So whether European earthworms are beneficial or detrimental is context- and habitat-specific: they can be good or neutral in gardens and other developed areas but detrimental in forests and unaltered landscapes.

More recently, another group of earthworms called jumping worms were introduced into North America. Sixteen species have been recorded from the continent but the three most invasive were first found in Maryland and New York in the 1930s and 1940s. While they have been in the region for decades, it's only been in the last 10–15 years that jumping worms have become a major issue.

Unlike the comparatively long-lived European earthworms, jumping worms are an annual species. The adults mature in 1–2 months, lay 10–50 egg cocoons in a few





A European earthworm (*Lumbricus terrestris*).
Photograph by melster via iNaturalist, used under a CC BY-ND 4.0 license.

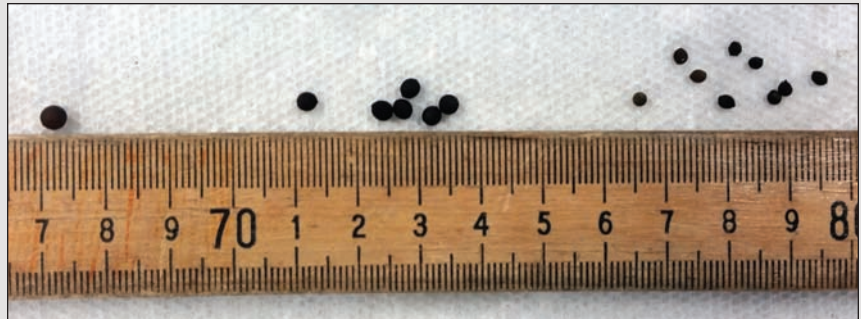
weeks to months, and die out with the onset of cold weather. This faster life cycle is fueled by a proportionally faster consumption of decaying plant material. Jumping worms are active at the soil surface, so the copious amount of castings (worm poop) they produce is exposed and dries out easily. This locks up nutrients and makes them unavailable to plants, changes water retention characteristics of the soil, and alters nutrient cycling. In forests and other natural systems, these conditions are detrimental to tree seedlings but beneficial to some invasive plants, so can alter tree recruitment and plant composition. In gardens and more artificial systems, it can result in poor plant establishment and growth, increased need for fertilizers, and even plant death.

Jumping worm overwinter as cocoons, which can persist in soil for up to two years, so they are often introduced into new areas as cocoons in mulch and soil. Females can reproduce without mating, so a single individual can establish a new population. Because they establish so easily, avoid bringing new soil and mulch into uninfested areas if possible. If individual plants are moved, inspect the soil and/or wash off and dispose of the soil before planting them. Jumping worm cocoons die at temperatures over 100°F, so if large amounts of mulch or soil are needed, it can be solarized under a plastic tarp for a few days. Using bagged mulch instead of bulk

mulch can also help.

Once jumping worms are established, they can be difficult to treat. Because jumping worms live at the soil surface, they do not survive in turf and are often confined to planting beds and raised beds when found in residential areas. Allowing infested beds to revert to turf for a few years can destroy a population, after which time the grass can be killed and the beds reestablished. Tea tree meal can be applied to small areas as a fertilizer. It contains

saponins, which irritate the worms' skin and drives them to the surface, where they can be collected and destroyed. Avoid moving soil and plants from infested areas to adjacent uninfested areas. For example, if jumping worms are confined to a raised bed, don't dispose of dead plants in a nearby forest that is uninfested. Unfortunately, there are no effective ways to control jumping worms across large areas, so once they become established in forests there is nothing that can be done.



Cocoons of *Amynthus* species can vary in size depending on species. Photo: Marie Johnston / UW-Madison Arboretum



Through their feeding behavior, *Amynthus* earthworms create a coarsely granular soil structure comprising small nutrient rich excrement, or "castings." It is sometimes described as having a texture similar to ground coffee. Photo: Marie Johnston / UW-Madison Arboretum



Boundary of an area invaded by *Amynthus* jumping worms, with the jumping worm's granular "soil signature" on the left and uninvaded soil on the right. Photo: Susan Day / UW-Madison Arboretum.

2024 Central Pennsylvania Native Plant Festival

Saturday, May 4th • 10:00am–3:00pm:
Millbrook Marsh Nature Center
Puddingtown Road • State College PA

The Pennsylvania Native Plant Society's Annual Native Plant Festival and Sale is excited for its second year at the Millbrook Marsh Nature Center! Celebrate the arrival of spring, the return of wildflowers, and the beginning of another gardening season at the Central PA Native Plant Festival and Sale and acquire some new additions to your garden.

There'll be over 350 species of native plants for sale; educational presentations and resource tables where you can get answers to

your native plant and gardening questions; Food by Good Day Cafe and Super Duper Cafe; live music by folk rock The River. Admission is free. (No sales before 10:00 am, but you can pre-order by contacting our vendors directly. A list of vendors and plants is available on the event page on our website.:

www.panativeplantsociety.org/pnps-central-pennsylvania-native-plant-festival.html

Schedule of Events

11:00am–2:00pm
Live music with the rock group The River

11:00am
Presentation: ***Easy Steps to Native Gardening***

Practical ways to eliminate lawn, select plants, design, etc. Presented by Pam and Doug Ford, Penn State Master Gardeners, and Project Managers, Snet-singer Butterfly Garden.

1:00pm
Presentation: ***Common Insects in Your Garden***

A who's who, and why to appreciate, the common insects in your garden, presented by Michael Skvarla, Assistant Professor of Arthropod Identification, PSU.

Calling all plant donations for the Native Plant Sale

The PNPS Donated Table is always a big attraction at the Festival, and it is our biggest fundraiser. With spring in hand, as you work in your garden, consider donating some divisions for the sale.

How to donate & some tips for digging and potting

- Dig and pot as early as the weather will allow. The longer your plant is in its pot, the better it will look **and** feel!
- Dig plants where you have permission to dig, for example, your yard or a friend's yard. DO NOT dig plants from "the wild."
- Notify Betsy Whitman (bbwhitman@gmail.com) ASAP with the Latin name (*Genus species*) of any donations. She can make a plant tag with name, plant description, and growing needs.
- If possible, bring any donations to the plant sale site on Friday, May 3, between 3:00–5:00 pm. Otherwise, please bring your donations **by 9:00 am** the day of the plant sale.

THANK YOU!

2024 Central Pennsylvania Native Plant Festival Featured Vendors

Backyard Forest
Bellefonte, PA
814-769-1917

Common Ground Farm
Spring Mills, PA
814-810-6238

Fiddlers Bend Meadowsweet Nursery
Woodward, PA
814-574-8099

Fox Hill Gardens
State College, PA
814-237-9087

Gino's Nursery
Newtown, PA
215-598-3992

Go Native Tree Farm
Manheim, PA
717-538-0393

Growin' Native Nursery
Mansfield, PA
570-662-3735

Keystone Wildflowers
Robinson, PA
610-750-4186

Meadowsweet Native Plant Farm
York, PA
717-487-3612

Milkweed Monarchy
Williamsport, PA
570-660-5085

Native Plant Company
Hanover, PA
304-995-6836

Tait Farm Native Plant Nursery
Centre Hall, PA
814-380-4060

The Garden
Centre Hall, PA

The Rock Garden
Boalsburg, PA

Winghaven Nursery
Coburn, PA
814-303-2218



Photo: Merrill David

13th Annual Lancaster Native Plant and Wildlife Festival

**Saturday, April 27
Manheim Township Overlook Park
Lancaster, PA**

Located at 595 Granite Run Drive in Lancaster, Overlook Park has been the home of this long running native plant event for many years. It is held annually, on the last Saturday of the month, rain or shine. The Lancaster Native Plant Alliance, a chapter of PNPS, will be there, selling strips of native plant plugs like *Asclepias tuberosa*, *Carex appalachica*, *Pycnanthemum muticum*, and more. We look forward to this event every year as it ushers in the spring season of finding great native plants for our gardens. It is a great chance to spread the word about using native plants in our landscapes.

**We hope that you will join us
and get your garden on with native
plants from these growers!**

- **Keystone Wildflowers**
- **Meadowsweet Native Plant Farm**
- **Butterfly Oasis Nursery**
- **Calyx Native Nursery**
- **Milkweed and More**
- **Three Oaks Native Plants & Design**
- **Lancaster Native Plant Alliance – PA Native Plant Society**

Learn more about the mission and goals of the Manheim Township committee (Habitat MT):

Habitat MT Mission:

Promote the conservation of natural habitats through education about the use of native plants and best conservation practices.

Habitat MT Goals:

- Educate about best conservation practices by explaining the function of riparian buffers, rain gardens, backyard wildlife habitat, sustainable forestry, and invasive plant removal.
- Partner with residents, businesses, and governments to replenish native plants to the natural areas and residential landscapes of Manheim Township.
- Engage the community to make changes towards a more sustainable and beneficial landscape.



Photo: Linda Ferich

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