The Native Plant Society of New Jersey, Fall 2024



Photo of bumblebee in *chelone glabra* by Mary Holland @naturally curious

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Photographs provided by NPSNJ members and contributors. Thank you for your contributions.
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The President's Corner

Dear Friends,

It's my pleasure to again address you in our newsletter. Earlier this summer in Lithuania, I had the opportunity to connect with leaders in the scientific and advocacy community, including the editor of the book on invasives in that state (these include *Amelanchier spicata*, Dwarf serviceberry, considered vulnerable in New Jersey) and maintainers of the country's endangered species list (including *Helix hadera*, English ivy). Sometimes, it seems easier to establish international relationships than local ones: if you are or know of a plant scientist who wants to be on the NPSNJ advisory board, please get in touch.

Speaking of such inversions, I was struck by how our *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* (Virginia creeper), is commonly used to cover walls instead of *Parthenocissus tricuspidata* (Boston ivy, which is really from Asia). Both are being observed for invasive tendencies, in Europe and in North America respectively. A few weeks later in Latvia, a lovely rooftop restaurant displayed a *Lobelia cardinalis* (Cardinal flower) in a vase, and I saw a garden with a *Phytolacca americana* (American pokeweed) next to a *Rhus typhina* (Staghorn sumac). Plants that are impossible to buy here except at specialist nurseries are commonly found there. Why can't we appreciate what we have? With that in mind, this issue is dedicated to native-only nurseries, which play a critical role in supporting biodiversity and ecological restoration. It's worth driving a little further or going on the web to shop at one. Most native-only nurseries grow plants from seed collected in the wild in our state. They sell few or no nativars, so their plants are genetically adapted to local environments and less likely to affect wild populations.

I have encountered plants at non-native nurseries advertised as native that have turned out to be invasive. Don't ask me about the "Lance Corporal" *Persicaria filiformis* (Asian jumpseed) that one garden center billed as native *Persicaria virginiana* (Virginia jumpseed). I am still pulling it out all over my yard after it took over every bare spot a year after planting.

Native-only nurseries often have educational outreach classes or workshops, and many of them have supported the Society directly. But as any native-only nursery owner will tell you, it's a labor of love; nobody gets rich growing natives. Native-only nurseries face a tougher business model than large, commercial nurseries which appeal to customers' tastes in the exotic and the inexpensive. Native-only nurseries minimize or avoid pesticides and don't depend on suppliers who may use neonicotinoids or other toxins. Native-only nurseries also don't have Christmas tree or wreath sales to keep income going in the off season. Several native nurseries are featured in this issue, but Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve in New Hope, PA, the Pollen Nation (mail order), and Earth First Native Plant Nursery in Egg Harbor are also well worth checking out.

Finally, I'd like to remind you that NPSNJ can use your help. Get involved and make a meaningful impact within this community of passionate advocates. Local chapters and the state are always in need of volunteers. The newsletter, advocacy efforts, and developing content for the web are just a few opportunities which could make a real difference. Perhaps you have experience with fundraising or know the ins and outs of WordPress. Maybe you are a field botanist or an arborist. Perhaps you can organize a chapter in a county without one. Together, we can amplify our mission to protect native biodiversity, and ensure that our message reaches a wider audience. Please reach out and get involved. The strength of our Society lies in the commitment of its members, and with your help, we can accomplish even more.

All the best,



Kazys Varnelis, PhD

To volunteer, contact Kazys at admin@npsnj.org

NPSNJ at Cape May Point Science Center



By Kazys Varnelis
President, NPSNJ

Last year, president Randi Eckel created the first "NPSNJ at" event at the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge to showcase the floral richness of the Refuge. This year, the State Programs committee hosted an overnight stay at the Cape May Point Science Center from September 27-29. Over 60 members participated.

The Cape May Point Science Center is at the southernmost point of New Jersey in a beautiful, historic Victorian-era building constructed as the Shoreham Hotel between 1887 and 1889. It served as a nuns' retreat for over a century, until Bob Mullock purchased and converted it into a nonprofit environmental science center focusing on avian, marine, and insect education and research.

Katie Bliss, NPSNJ member and Center caretaker worked with State Programs Chair Kim Correro and the committee for half a year to make this event possible. Everyone at the Center was welcoming, and the Society is most grateful for their fabulous hospitality.

Soon after arrival, Katie gave a tour of the pollinator garden she planted with some support from the Society's Mini-grant program. Saturday was full of nature-based activities, sites to visit, and plants to identify. We set up a trial project on iNaturalist, an online platform and mobile app that allows users to record and share observations of plants, animals, and other organisms. It combines crowdsourced data collection with artificial intelligence for species identification, creating a vast, collaborative database of biodiversity information used by amateur nature enthusiasts and professional scientists. Our project at h**ttps://www.inaturalist.org/projects/npsnj-cape-may-weekend** had 11 observers recording 162 observations of 93 species.

Vice President of Chapters Elaine Silverstein found two examples of *Spiranthes bightensis* (Atlantic ladies' tresses), an orchid species first identified in 2021 and globally imperiled. As a pteridophile (lover of ferns), I used iNaturalist to locate a solitary example of *Sceptridium dissectum* (Cutleaf grapefern), which isn't threatened but nevertheless hard to find in NJ and alerted the Cape May Bird Observatory of its presence. The strange drones of *Neotibicen latifasciatus* (the Coastal Scissor Grinder), a cicada whose holotype was first gathered in Cape May County serenaded us throughout the weekend.

That evening, 100 overnight guests and local members gathered for dinner and a film screening of "The Unfolding of Pat Sutton's Wildlife Garden," and the evening concluded with a Q&A session with Pat, who is a well known New Jersey native plant enthusiast. Utilizing her magnificent close-up photos, the film showcased the garden's transformation over 40 years and the intricate relationships between native plants and pollinators.

After breakfast,we checked out and departed for visits to Cape May resident Teresa Knipper's lovely native garden, the incomparable habitat created by Pat Sutton,, and the amazing woodland garden run by Southeast Chapter co-leader Jesse Connor.

The event was a resounding success. Some of us talked about starting up a Cape May chapter and getting Delaware Bayshore going again. Anyone interested? Nothing made me happier than members asking about the next event. Perhaps next year we should visit the very opposite corner of the state in the northwest. If you know of a site where we could host or can volunteer to help, contact me at admin@npsj.org.

Toadshade Wildflower Farm



By Irene O. Sabin
NPSNJ Hunterdon Chapter

Toadshade Wildflower Farm is a mail order native plant nursery located in Frenchtown, NJ, owned and operated by Dr. Randi V. Wilfert Eckel. All plants are propagated on-site by the nursery from seed, cuttings, or by division; none are harvested from the wild nor obtained from an outside grower. As a specialist nursery, Toadshade sells only straight species plants and seeds that are native to eastern North America, with a focus on perennial wildflowers.

Dr. Eckel established Toadshade Wildflower Farm in 1996 (celebrating 28 years in business!) and still runs the business with her family. She says that her goal in starting Toadshade was to make native wildflowers, especially perennials, more easily available to the public, saying "our mission has always been the responsible, sustainable propagation of native species." As the nursery has grown over the years, Dr. Eckel has been dedicating more time to public outreach and education, teaching how the use of native plants benefits private gardens and public landscapes while supporting wildlife and the environment. With a doctorate in entomology and a professional background in research at the USDA, Dr. Eckel's particular passion is champi-



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oning the importance of native plant diversity in landscapes, and she emphasizes the use of straight species over cultivars, explaining "plant breeding changes plant chemistry, which can dramatically impact how—and if—insects and other wildlife can use the plant species they rely on."

Dr. Eckel is past President of the Native Plant Society of New Jersey and currently serves as board Entomologist and Vice President of Membership. She presents lectures, seminars, and workshops on native plants to groups throughout the Northeastern states. She also consults with private property owners who would like to introduce native plants into their gardens. Informative articles by Dr. Eckel are posted on the Toadshade blog, which readers can request to receive by email, along with a copy of Toadshade's annual (free) printed catalog.

Toadshade sells plants and seeds at various public events and farmers markets, and the calendar of current events and educational presentations can be found on the farm's website (**www.toadshade.com**), where you can also find complete plant lists, growing guides, and seed-starting instructions. Toadshade is primarily a mail order nursery and the farm itself is not open to the public, but in addition to shipping orders, arrangements can be made for local pick-up in downtown Frenchtown.

Owner:

Randi V. Wilfert Eckel, PhD

Toadshade Wildflower Farm
53 Everittstown Road
Frenchtown, NJ 08825

www.toadshade.com
toadshade@toadshade.com
voice/fax 908-996-7500

We're on Facebook now!
Check us out and 'Like' us at

www.facebook.com/ToadshadeWildflowerFarm

Wild Ridge Plants





By Kathy Trarbach
NPSNJ Hunterdon Chapter

An unlikely path led Jared Rosenbaum and Rachel Mackow to establish Wild Ridge Plants, their farm high on a Warren County ridge in Alpha NJ near the Delaware River. After attending Rutgers, where Jared studied anthropology and Rachel photography, both pursued interests in the arts, music, and writing. It wasn't until moving to a cabin in the Sourlands and roaming the woods that they became fascinated by the interrelationships between plant and animal communities there. After working for environmental groups and removing invasive plants, they recognized a need for someone to grow plants which could restore these habitats. Wild Ridge Plants, LLC was born.

Wild Ridge specializes in growing plants from local ecotype seeds, which are genetically unique to a specific geographical area. A plant species may be native to both NJ and OK, but it grows in starkly different conditions and evolves to survive. Collecting seeds both from the NJ wilds and their own farm preserves NJ's local genetic diversity. Jared explains that they grow "what thrives where we live."

At Wild Ridge, plants are nurtured sustainably, using all organic potting mix and amendments supplemented with collected rainwater. The use of only organic fertilizers releases nutrients to roots slowly, preparing them for conditions after transplant. Jared explained, it's "as close as possible to what the plants will experience in the natural world." Rachel stressed that they don't rush the plants, only selling them when root growth is sufficient for survival. They source many nursery supplies locally to support not only the community of plants, but the human and business community around them.

Jared also conducts botanical surveys and plans ecological restorations. He has published 2 books: *The Puddle Garden* for children and *Wild Plant Culture* for adults. *Rooted*, a series of plant videos he created, is available on You-Tube. Rachel's consulting service "Your Native Yard" helps landowners create a plant palette to suit specific needs. Their arts training enables them to do their own writing, photography, and graphic design in house.

Jared used to see the natural world as a respite from society, but after immersing himself in the woods, he realized that humans impact plant communities everywhere. It's "hard to pretend that nature is a solitary chapel," he mused. His mission is to make that interaction beneficial for both plants and people. For Rachel, being at Wild Ridge harmoniously aligns her family time with hard work, creative sensibilities and values. They serve as ambassadors working to improve "the fate of the plants"and the communities which depend on them.

One can order plants from **https://www.wildridgeplants.com** to be shipped or picked up.

The farm is open for limited hours during the growing season for shopping and strolling its meadow paths. See **@wildridgeplants** on Facebook and Instagram.

Pinelands Direct

By Tara Sullivan
NPSNJ Southwest Chapter Co-Leader

Tom Knezick of Pinelands Direct Native Plants comes from a family of native plant purveyors. In 1983, his parents founded Pinelands Nursery, which is a wonderful native plant resource open to the wholesale market primarily for large environmental restoration projects. Involved in his parents' business, Tom went to a New Jersey Native Plant Society meeting and discovered members were frustrated by how difficult it was to find native plants for retail sale. So, in 2014, Tom established Pinelands Direct Native Plants to give retail buyers an outlet to purchase New Jersey native plants online for shipping or pickup at the nursery's location in Columbus, New Jersey. In 2016, his wife Melissa joined the team and business was good! Fast forward a few years to 2020, when the pandemic hit, and demand for native plants absolutely exploded. Pinelands Direct Native Plants was there to meet the onslaught, and orders have only increased since then.

Tom is also very visible as a spokesperson and advocate for native plants and ecological restoration. He and his friend Fran Chismar host a super popular podcast called "Native Plants, Healthy Planet," which is presented by Pinelands Nursery. Tom told me the idea grew when in the course of doing business, he had fascinating conversations with people in the native plant and restoration world. Why not record them in podcast form? Fran was already familiar with podcasting, having hosted a few music-related podcasts, and they thought it would be fun to put out some creative content for native plant enthusiasts. Their original idea was to have in-person conversations, but they completed about two episodes before COVID hit. They started interviewing people via video conferencing apps and, as a result, were able to expand their reach and network with folks from all over the country. Today, "Native Plants, Healthy Planet," and their other podcast, "The Buzz," are wildly successful. Tom says that people now recognize him by his voice alone!

Tom's parents recently retired from Pinelands Nursery, increasing Tom's responsibilities on the wholesale end. Today he's tweaking how things are run at Pinelands Direct Native Plants in order to meet demand, and wondering if they need to scale up. Perhaps, more is on the horizon for the business. Pinelands Direct Native Plants has consistently been an invaluable resource for our NPSNJ chapters, and it is a real leader in the rapidly growing native plant movement. It's awesome we have them right here in New Jersey! Don't hesitate to check out their website, which is loaded with ferns, trees, shrubs, flowers, and grasses, at

http://www.pinelandsdirect.com.





Earth First Native Plant Nursery



By Raven Ahmed
Founder, Owner

I have been a lover of wildflowers since I was a kid. Upon the purchase of my first digital camera, I photographed blue vervain which I had never seen before, growing along the roadside. After identifying it, I returned to the site to collect seeds and grew the plants the following spring. I tried giving them away, but nobody wanted them. Someone suggested E-bay, so I sold plants there. I did this with other species, and it became a hobby to find, photograph and propagate new native plants. Working in a big box nursery, I realized people looking for plants recommended in BHG magazine included several invasive species, bad for our ecosystem. Since we did not carry the plants that were native and helpful, a native plant nursery was needed. So in 2008, I started **Earth First Native Plant Nursery, LLC**. Why Earth First? When I started growing the plants, I repurposed materials such as old yogurt cups for pots and vertical blind cutoffs for tags. I strive to live with a light footprint, trying to consider the Earth first when making decisions that impact the planet.

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At Earth First, our mission is to combat habitat degradation and protect wildlife by both heightening awareness and promoting the use of native plants in the home garden. By offering hard to find native plants at reasonable prices, we aim to replace native plants lost to sprawl and development, reduce the incentive to harvest wild plants, leading to their decline, and provide food/shelter for local wildlife populations. I do occasional talks to enlighten the public on what to plant and how plant choice impacts our ecosystems, and to bring awareness to the relationship between plants and animals.

Earth First provides herbaceous plants, shrubs and trees, including native roses, viburnums, button bush, milkweeds, goldenrods, and asters. I grow most of the plants from seed, but occasionally acquire them from nearby growers. All our plants are neonic pesticide-free. I only use organic fertilizer when needed. I provide selection guidance as I want folks to have the right plant for their locations for a successful habitat garden. Also, I put a lot of love into the plants and want to see them thrive. It's so rewarding when folks show me pictures of my plants years later. I do site consultations and occasional garden design. I can provide references for someone else to do plant installations. I am not currently selling seed, though I may in the future.

Earth First is a retail business that serves the Mid-Atlantic states. We give discounts to fundraising groups. There's a seasonal plant list on our website, and orders are done via our email address. Since there are no public hours on the premises, customers make appointments to pick up their orders.

Email: earth1stnatives@aol.com
Web:http://www.earthfirstnatives.com
twitter.com: Earth First Natives (@Earth1stNatives) / X

Gino's Nursery





By Kazys Varnelis
President, NPSNJ

Gino's Native Plant Nursery isn't in New Jersey, but only a stone's throw away, in Newtown, Pennsylvania. Just a short drive from New Hope and Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve (which is also well worth going to for native plants), it has built a strong reputation for its diverse plant offerings and has supported NPSNJ throughout the years. Any list of nurseries for New Jersey natives would be remiss not to include it. I love Gino's and visit it frequently throughout the growing season for stock for my woodland garden.

Gino's was founded in 2012 by Nicholas D'Amato, who grew up deeply connected to horticulture through his family's involvement in the nursery and landscaping business. The nursery is named after his father. Nick graduated from Delaware Valley College with a degree in Ornamental Horticulture and Environmental Design. While in school, he developed a strong passion for ecological restoration.

Armed with a growing awareness of the need for native plants and the scarcity of availability, he founded Gino's Nursery as both a business and a form of activism.

The mission of the nursery is to introduce native plants into as many landscapes as possible while educating the public on their ecological importance. The nursery offers over 500 species, from common plants like milkweed and spicebush, to rarer species such as goldenseal. Around 80 species are propagated from seed on-site, and the nursery continues to expand its propagation efforts. Any plants they do not propagate, are seedlings sourced from local growers, ensuring their inventory is suited for the regional environment. Organic practices are a core principle, with no chemical pesticides used in their production. The nursery also prioritizes educational outreach. Nick, the retail manager Mare McClellan, and production manager Maya Marcy host regular events to educate the public about native plants and their role in supporting local ecosystems. Customers receive detailed guidance on plant selection, ensuring that they not only purchase plants but also learn how to care for them effectively.

Gino's operates seasonally with retail hours from Wednesday to Sunday. While primarily a retail operation, it offers a wholesale discount to qualified buyers. The nursery does not offer garden design or installation services but is always available to help with plant selection.

By cultivating and promoting native species, Gino's aims to restore damaged habitats and encourage sustainable landscaping practices, making it an important resource for gardeners in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Gino's Nursery
2237 Second Street Pike
Newtown PA, 18940
267-750-9042

sales@ginosnursery.com

My Backyard at Nectars





In 2019, Rosalind was awarded "Young Nursery Professional of the Year" by the New Jersey Nursery and Landscape Association (NJNLA) for her active participation in the industry and her desire to connect people and plants together

By Rosalind Doremus
Founder/Owner

My Backyard at Nectars is a relatively new garden center, but that doesn't mean its owner, Rosalind Doremus, is a stranger to gardening or to the native plant world. As a young girl, she enjoyed being outside, soaking in the sun's rays, listening to bird songs, and noticing different tree bark patterns. If anything, she was happier outside than in, and even though she rolled her eyes as her mom rattled off plant names, it wasn't long before Rosalind was working with plants instead of just admiring them.

At the age of 16, she started at her first nursery job. She didn't know much about plants, but in helping each customer, she not only learned a new one (how big it got, where it grew, and its Latin name), she also made a new friend. After eight years, she moved on to another nursery, where her plant palette was expanded. Before, she knew one coreopsis; now she knew eight. Where she knew one coneflower, there were now fifteen! It was not only the diversity that excited her, but also the emphasis on pollinators and the environmental impact of each plant choice.

In 2019, Rosalind was named "Young Nursery Professional of the Year" by the New Jersey Nursery and Landscape Association (NJNLA) for her active participation in the industry and her desire to connect people and plants together. Shortly thereafter, she lost both her parents within an eight month period and decided to leave her job. She took to her own garden to find some peace of mind. Rosalind and her husband Matt worked to create massive meadow stretches in their own yard. It was there she formed true relationships with her plants and realized the joy that each one brought. Each new bug and bird not only added to her education, but to her heart and healing.

For over 15 years, Rosalind has led her own Facebook gardening group "My Backyard," teaching locals about unique plants and new insects. More than words and pictures, she offers the personal sentiments behind them: about the bigger picture, the magic of a new day, the peace of the sunset, or the quiet respite of winter.

In 2023, she stumbled across a garden center to rent. It screamed her name, and she answered. Without a single doubt in her heart, Rosalind opened My Backyard at Nectars in Titusville, NJ. To this day, she continues to grow with the community around her, celebrating each plant sold and each new customer whom she considers a friend. She is an active member of the NJNLA, NPSNJ, and a business partner of the Sourland Conservancy. With her feet rooted in the ground, Rosalind makes My Backyard at Nectars more than just a garden center at which to find native plants. Rosalind is a friend of the earth who aims to educate and provide hope for our community and our struggling ecosystems.

My Backyard at Nectars
1600 River Road
Titusville, NJ
(609) 737-9200
Open Wed-Sun 10-4

Summersweet Native Plants Nursery

By Hara L. Rola
NPSNJ ENews Co-Editor

Owner and lead grower, Joseph Russell founded Summersweet Native Plants, Mays Landing, NJ in 2018 to provide quality native plants to retail consumers in South Jersey. Joseph can identify the right native plant for a customer's specific planting site, project or goals, whether it be for conservation, formal gardens, wildlife/pollinator gardens, meadows, or low maintenance home gardens.

Joseph holds degrees in Marine Biology and Natural Resources. He has training in landscape design, plant propagation, plant identification, and control and eradication measures for invasive plants through Mt. Cuba Center Botanical Garden (Hockessin, DE) Ecological Gardening certificate program. He is also certified in stream stabilization and flood resiliency. He had interned with Jared Rosenbaum and Rachel Mackow at Wild Ridge Plants, LLC, Alpha, N.J. And, he has published papers on native species management and state wildlife management areas.

Summersweet uses organic growing practices, so that their plants are not exposed to chemical fertilizers, neonicotinoids, or other synthetic pesticides. They use only organic certified fertilizers, amendments, and biological controls, which makes their plants safe for all pollinators and wildlife. Some of their plants may contain a bonus, such as a Monarch butterfly caterpillar already found on a common milkweed by the purchaser.

They grow North American native plants with a focus on the Mid-Atlantic and Northeastern regions of the U.S. All their plants are genetically diverse, straight species grown from open-pollinated seeds that are local eco-type, when available. And their plants are grown in an organic potting mix outdoors in unheated hoop houses so that they adapt to regional weather conditions.



All their plants are genetically diverse, straight species grown from open-pollinated seeds that are local eco-type, when available.

Summersweet provides a large selection of native plants. A few examples of specific species are: *Physocarpus opulifolius* (Ninebark), *Viburnum nudum* (Possumhaw viburnum), *Ceanothus americanus* (New Jersey Tea), *Clethra alnifolia* (Summersweet). They only sell live plants, they do not sell seeds or plugs. And, they do not provide garden design, installation, or maintenance services.

Shopping at Summersweet is done on their website and customers make an appointment to pick up their order. Orders take at least 24 hours to prepare. Occasionally, appointments can be made for in-person shopping, which would be posted on their website.

Summersweet is open from early to mid-April through the end of October or early November.

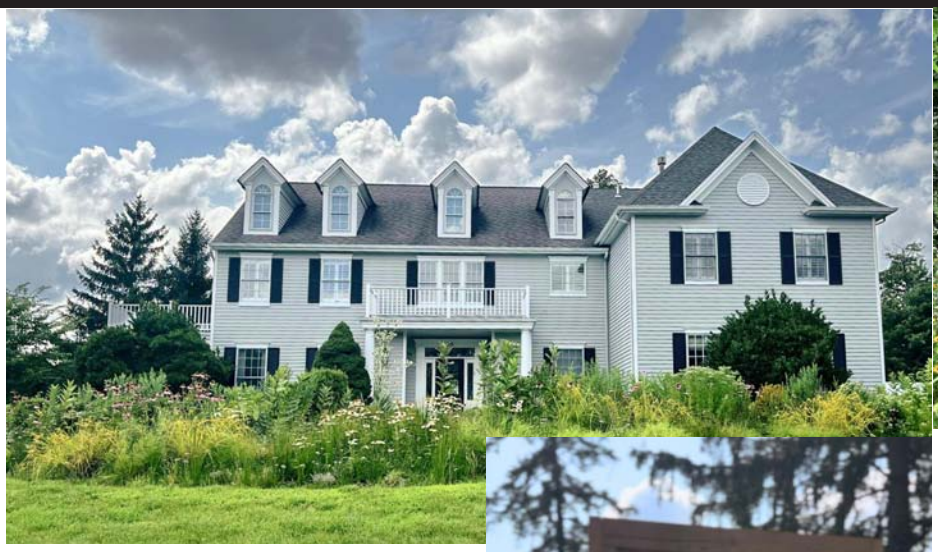
Summersweet Nursery

6863 Harding Highway,
Mays Landing, NJ 08330.
609-287-0596.
Email: info@summersweetnative-plants.com.

Web: www.summersweetnative-plants.com.

Follow them on Instagram and FaceBook.

The Wildstead Supply Company







By L.Be Sholar,
Founder/Owner

"There has to be a better way." That's what I was thinking when I first started putting together The Wildstead Supply Company. Every garden center I visited was rife with single use plastic, chemicals galore, and invasive plants being sold as "problem solvers." Was it too much to ask to have a nearby garden center that was native-focused, plastic-free, not dripping with harmful chemicals, and aesthetically beautiful? In short, I created the place where I wanted to shop. I knew I wasn't that special - lots of people just like me were looking for a better way to buy plants. Since my company was already busy providing native plant design and installation services, we'd already had to problem-solve the sourcing of these items. So, I figured someone around here had to provide this… why not me?

At Wildstead, we aim to be the bridge between aesthetic landscaping practices and eco-focused native plant garden design. We view nibbled leaves as a badge of honor, and we want to prove that a longer table is better than a higher fence.

Wildstead believes that the world would be a better place if it was full of more diversity, more community, more communion with the rest of Nature. Since wild spaces have been invaded by non-native plants, which originally spread from people's yards, our primary focus is changing the practices of urban landscaping to eliminate invasive plants escaping cultivation and causing harm. In short, the urban yard is "patient zero" in the pandemic of invasive plants. We need to stop the spread by "curing" the urban yards of this problem so that our wild spaces will not continually be "reinfected." Through beautiful design principles, workshops, and readily-available retail supplies, Wildstead is offering a way to achieve real, lasting change.

The Wildstead Supply Co is our design studio and service business supply house, but we offer public retail hours as well. We specialize in straight-species native plants and seeds sourced as locally as possible. Reputable growers like Pinelands, North Creek, and Kind Earth are some of our suppliers. We sell our plants in plantable biodegradable CowPots and our soil is inoculated with OMRI(Organic Materials Review Institute)-certified OrganiLock Soil Food, which provides healthy microbial support. When you plant a plant from Wildstead, not only are you planting native, you're jump-starting soil regeneration, too. We promise: no invasive plants, no toxic chemicals, no single use plastic.

Wildstead Supply Co
96 River Rd in
East Hanover, NJ.

Email info@wildstead.com.
Visit wildstead.com
Subscribe to the newsletter which includes updates, retail hours, consultation requests, and upcoming workshops.

Follow on IG @thewildsteadcompany for sneak peeks of our designs and installations.

Jersey Days Event—Centerton Nursery







By Bobbie Herbs
Co-Chair of NPSNJ IGC Committee & Co-Leader of NPSNJ Southwest Chapter

Photos By Mike Jacob,
NPSNJ Webmaster

The Independent Garden Center (IGC) Committee held more than a dozen Pollinator Day education events at ten local independent garden centers in 2024. As part of our outreach, NPSNJ has developed a relationship with Centerton Nursery in Bridgeton, NJ, which invited us to table at their annual open house.

Jersey Days, a two day event, drew retailers from eleven states to South Jersey for nursery visits to Centerton Nursery, Overdevest Nurseries, Medford Nursery, and Lucas Greenhouses. Retailers learn about new plant material and tour greenhouses and fields before ordering for 2025.

Centerton is a third-generation family business started in 1974. With 200 acres of greenhouses and fields, they supply top quality plants to IGCs in 33 states. This past season they introduced the "TrueBlew" line of straight species native perennial plants. In New Jersey alone, they distributed over 20,000 native plants to nearly 20 IGCs. Next year, they will add familiar native shrubs like viburnums, chokeberries, and winterberries.

Several Centerton employees shared their experiences with propagating and growing straight species. Growers of traditional garden plants work with cultivars and hybrids where consistency is their virtue. John Tighe, Field Production Manager commented on the challenges of growing straight species where each plant has individual variations. "Straight species can be a challenge to grow as compared to selected cultivars where growing habits are well documented and selected upon for that [plant type]. It's worth growing [straight species] to fill a niche market of new home buyers that are trying to establish native landscapes or homeowners that may just be learning about natives and their benefits to the environment."

Amy Ordog, Vice President, Centerton Nurseries, told us, "NJ Native Plant Society really exceeded my expectations, especially on their garden center initiative. I experienced first-hand the effort and time that goes into a single event along with the ongoing support that the garden centers are receiving. I've suggested many of our customers to get involved and try to plan a Pollinator Day!"

The IGC committee and liaisons will be meeting later in October to share their experiences with Pollinator Days to develop best practices for 2025.



BlewLabel® TrueBlew™ Native Perennials & Shrubs

Centerton Nursery

Plants native to a given area play an important role in the local ecology. From birds to bugs and fungi to fauna, utilizing plants that have adapted to growing in your region's conditions is not only great for your garden, but great for the environment around you.

Native plants comes in two distinct types: species and cultivar. A cultivar (short for "cultivated variety") is a selection of a native plant that was chosen for a specific reason (like size, habit, or flower power). Our TrueBlew™ plants are species forms, which means it is closest to how this plant is found in nature and can have variations from one plant to another - just like plants in nature.

White Turtlehead *(Chelone glabra)*







By Irene O. Sabin
NPSNJ Hunterdon Chapter

White turtlehead *(Chelone glabra)* is a native wildflower in the Eastern half of North America. Originally in the figwort family, the *Chelone* genus was reclassified to the plantain *(Plantaginaceae)* family after DNA testing. *Chelone* meant tortoise in ancient Greek mythology and the two-lipped flowers resemble a turtle with a protruding head.



Glabra refers to the smooth, hairless leaves and stems of the plant. Other common names include Snakehead, Balmony and Shellflower.

The white turtlehead plant is a clump forming perennial which grows two to three feet tall and up to two feet wide in sun to part shade. It remains upright in dappled sunlight but may need to be staked in deeper shade. Dark green, lance-shaped leaves with coarse margins are opposite each other on the hairless stems. Terminal racemes of white flowers, sometimes tinged with green or pink, open from the bottom up to the top of the cluster. Smaller clusters of buds open on the leaf axils along the square stems. In nature, white turtlehead grows at the edge of wetlands and streams and so would be suitable for rain gardens, wildflower gardens and ornamental borders with moist soil. It spreads slowly by both rhizomes and seeds. In the garden, propagation is by division or seed after cold stratification. The plants attract butterflies, hummingbirds, and bumblebees. They are important host plants for the Baltimore checkerspot butterfly *(Euphydryas phaeton)* whose larvae feed on the leaves. Turtleheads bloom from late summer to fall in our region, which makes them a good addition to a fall garden.



NPSNJ Essex Chapter Native Shrub Sale & Fall Fest











By Kate Albright
NPSNJ Essex County Chapter
Steering Committee Member

For the second year in a row, the Essex County Chapter held a Native Shrub Sale & Fall Fest at the Essex County Environmental Center at West Essex Park, Roseland, NJ. Our chapter sold 175 shrubs and small trees to over 60 customers. We were pleased to partner with Gino's Nursery in Newton PA and to bring their beautiful shrubs at reasonable prices to northern NJ!

Steering committee member Jessica Miller led guided walks along a wooded trail, where participants learned to identify plants such as *Lindera benzoin* (Spicebush), *Sambucus canadensis* (Elderberry) and *Liquidambar styraciflua* (American Sweetgum). *Cephalanthus occidentalis* (Common buttonbush) likes moist conditions, she told them, and with a river nearby, was thriving. The walk continued past a *Asimina triloba* (Pawpaw) patch, ending in a sunny garden filled with the joyful blooms of *Solidago* (Goldenrod), *Eupatorium perfoliatum* (Boneset) and *Physostegia virginiana* (Obedient plant).

Not only did our chapter sell plants and lead guided walks, but we also held a pruning workshop organized by steering committee member Suzie Yamarone. Led by Nancy Critchley, the workshop was both informative and hands-on.

Somerset Chapter Hosts Butterfly Walk at Lord Stirling Park



By Jane Hurwitz
NPSNJ Somerset Chapter

On September 12, 2024, eighteen adults and one intrepid two-year old met at the Environmental Education Center (EEC) in the 1,000-acre Lord Stirling Park, Basking Ridge, NJ for a butterfly walk led by naturalists from the EEC. The Park encompasses a variety of habitats including woods, meadows (currently full of blooming goldenrod), swamps, marshes, and ponds resulting in diverse plant, animal, and insect populations.

Before heading out for the walk, naturalist Rich Hoffman explained the Monarch's life cycle, the importance of milkweed as Monarch caterpillar food, and his experiences with raising caterpillars. Visual aids included live caterpillars and milkweed, as well as milkweed bugs.

Attendees also reviewed printouts from the impressive online "Nature Companion Guide" that catalogs the 56 butterfly species observed, so far, in the Park. In addition to butterflies, the EEC maintains online guides for birds, native plants, trees, shrubs, and native bees. The Nature Companion Guides are found at **www.somersetcountyparks.org/environmental-education-center/pages/nature-companion-guides.**

Not a lot of butterflies were observed on this particular walk, but naturalist Ben Barkley pointed out known butterfly habitat as the walk progressed. Natural resources for butterflies abound at the EEC with both ample nectar and native host plants available. Even adjacent to the parking lot, Ben pointed out a large Wild Cherry tree that is the host plant for Red-spotted Purple which are often sighted on the path near to the tree.

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Late Bloomers

The Goldenrods
were late this year
had not opened
their yolk yellow flowers
'til early September,
those iconic blossoms
that create sunshine
on a cloudy day

What caused the delay
is climate change
the underlying culprit
or elemental imbalances…
our resident pollinators
are baffled too
as they scurry
for the first few blooms
that now glow bright
like the gold of sunrise

The tiny florets
will overtake the garden
with a flurry of color
and a buzzing crowd
of winged gardeners
will now vie
for the last
of summer's sustenance

Hara L. Rola 2024