NATĪVE PLANT NEWS

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Native plants to **replace your lawn**

FOR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS OF NATIVE PLANT TRUST

SPRING/SUMMER 2024

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Change and Continuity

When I arrived in Massachusetts nearly seven years ago to work as the director of the Botanic Garden of Smith College, Debbi Edelstein, Native Plant Trust's recently retired executive director, was one of the first people I contacted.

TIM JOHNSON
Chief Executive Officer

Debbi welcomed me warmly, as did the many staff at Native Plant Trust, who I came to know as scientific partners, fellow educators, trusted colleagues, and inspiring advocates addressing the major challenges of our day: climate change, biodiversity loss, and social injustice. But this wasn't my first exposure to Native Plant Trust.

As a graduate student, my labmate passed me a paper on seed banking published by Native Plant Trust. We were struck by the soundness of the organization's approach to conservation: Work within the region on problems of global significance. Generously collaborate with the best and brightest partners for maximum reach and impact. Empower community members to participate in conservation projects afield. And help home horticulturists create healthy habitats in their backyards and gardens. Twenty years later I still remember wondering out loud, "Could you imagine working for a place like Native Plant Trust someday?"

Joining Native Plant Trust is a full circle moment for me. And whether as CEO or supporter, it is an exciting time to be a part of Native Plant Trust because excitement about native plants is growing! Whether you are a new native plant gardener or a seasoned conservation practitioner, you are at the forefront of a movement that is gaining momentum. A movement to rethink our relationship with nature, to act in ways that are more environmentally harmonious, and to honor the unique flora and fauna of this region.

Photo: Tim Johnson, © Sam Masinter

Native Plant Trust

VOLUME 11 | NO. 1

NATIVE PLANT NEWS

DESIGN
Moth Design

EDITORIAL
Jane Roy Brown; send comments to jrbrown@NativePlantTrust.org

COVER
The flat-topped clusters of flower heads on tall white-aster (*Doellingeria umbellata*) make for a dramatic floral display that attracts both long- and short-tongued bees, wasps, flies, butterflies (including the Harris's checkerspot butterfly), beetles, and other insects. © Melissa Blackall/WildLinks

Native Plant News is published by Native Plant Trust, an independent, nonprofit, member-supported organization. Subscriptions are included in membership dues. For information, contact: membership@NativePlantTrust.org.

IN BRIEF

Finalizing *Flora Conservanda*

—Michael Piantedosi, Director of Conservation

After two-plus years in the making, *Flora Conservanda: 3rd Edition* will be published this fall. Like its predecessors in 1996 and 2013, this latest assessment of New England's rare vascular plants in need of regional conservation actions was compiled by members of our New England Plant Conservation Program, a network of government agencies and private nonprofit organizations. Generous funding was provided by the Oak Spring Garden Foundation, which supported a fellowship for Research Botanist Dr. Jessamine Finch to compile and analyze rare plant data for this update.

New Hop Brook Bridge Completed

—Uli Lorimer, Director of Horticulture

Through the fall and winter, Horticulture staff at Garden in the Woods wrangled sections of the new Hop Brook bridge and boardwalk into place. The work was funded by generous donors and a grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund, a program of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, administered through a collaborative arrangement between MassDevelopment and the Mass Cultural Council.

01

Testing Germination of Robbins's Cinquefoil

—Dr. Jessamine Finch, Research Botanist

Hundreds of diminutive seedlings of Robbins's cinquefoil (*Potentilla robbinsiana*) filled the thermogradient table at Nasami Farm this winter. With support from Botanic Gardens Conservation International's Forest Service Rare Plant Partnerships, we are working to characterize seed dormancy and germination for this globally rare alpine plant, and to evaluate seed longevity in a seed bank.

Assisted by a student at Framingham State University in Framingham, MA, we recently evaluated fresh material collected in July 2023, along with banked collections from the last 20 years, made possible by the seed bank of the New England Plant Conservation Program. We collaborated with White Mountain National Forest Botanist Dan Sperduto and staff on the experimental design and seed collection. A gift from Chicago Botanic Garden, the thermogradient table, which provides a continual gradient of hotter to cooler temperatures, enables us to identify minimum, maximum, and optimum germination temperatures that can be used to forecast responses to changing climate, such as shifts in the timing of germination. By testing seed banked over a 20-year period, we can also gain insights into variation in seed germination and detect declines in viability while seed is in frozen storage.

If our seedlings mature, adult plants will return home to Mt. Washington in New Hampshire, where they will be featured in a public garden that provides the conservation history and future of this iconic endemic plant. Native Plant Trust was instrumental in helping *P. robbinsiana* recover enough to be removed from the federal Endangered Species List in 2002.

A Garden of Contrasts

—David Falk, Senior Horticulturist

Six years ago on a quiet summer morning at Garden in the Woods, a large red oak, destabilized by waterlogged soil, toppled into the Lily Pond. Subsequently, the Horticulture staff removed three other large red oaks for safety. But the shade-loving plants beneath suffered in the full sun, prompting a redesign.

Sun-loving specimens in the former Rare Plant Garden, including northeastern beard-tongue (*Penstemon hirsutus*), narrow-leaved vervain (*Verbena simplex*), and white flat-topped-goldenrod (*Oligoneuron album*), inspired the new Lily Pond planting design as a plant community, using species that grow together in the wild. But while white flat-topped goldenrod grows in thin, often alkaline soils, some of the plants that grow alongside it, such as bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) and stiff aster (*Ionactis linarifolius*), are often found in highly acidic

01 Hop Brook Bridge under construction this winter. Stephen Kiely © Native Plant Trust

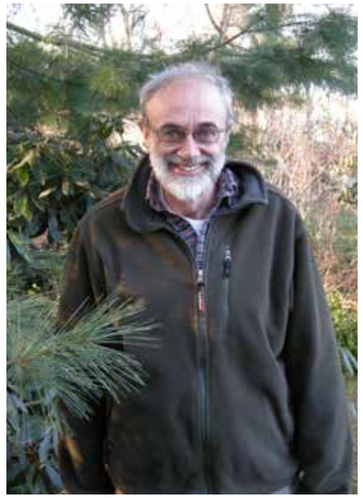
coastal plains. The dramatic contrast lent a storyline to the design. We planted swaths of alkaline-associated plants, including white flat-topped goldenrod (*Oligoneuron album*) and broad-leaved sedge (*Carex platyphylla*) against drifts of acid-loving species such as bellflower (*Campanula rotundifolia*) and wild lupine (*Lupinus perennis*), interplanted with common species from both environments: Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*), poverty grass (*Danthonia spicata*), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), and three-toothed-cinquefoil (*Sibbaldia tridentata*). We also planted pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*) alongside existing paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*) and striped maple (*Acer pensylvanicum*). So far, all the new plantings are thriving.

02

Honoring Ted Elliman

Ted Elliman, botanist extraordinaire and author of *Wildflowers of New England*, received Native Plant Trust's 2023 Volunteer Service Award for more than 20 years of generously volunteering his leadership and scientific expertise. A popular instructor and sought-after field guide, Ted has roamed the region's wilds as a Plant Conservation Volunteer and serves on our Sanctuary Committee. He also has shared his extensive native plant knowledge and ecological experience with other volunteers, program instructors and participants, interns, and staff members. He is currently leading our herbarium project, which aims to digitize and curate 5,375 native plant specimens collected from 1840 to 2016, and provide access to data from this collection for education, research, collaboration, and plant conservation.

Please join us in congratulating Ted on this award. To honor him with a gift, please support his herbarium project via nativeplanttrust.org/herbarium, or call the Philanthropy Department: 774-519-5570.



03

Good News about Life Income Gifts

For friends of Native Plant Trust who are approaching or embracing senior status, unprecedented recent changes in the world of charitable life-income gifts warrant attention. Where else could a 75-year old get a rate of 7 percent? Two years ago, that rate would have been only 5.4 percent.

If you enjoy having tax-free income, it is also worth noting that most of your future income from a charitable life-income gift would likely be tax-free. Native Plant Trust Council member and planned giving consultant Peter Doyle has kindly offered to confidentially run the numbers for you and help you protect native plants in the future while providing income for yourself today. Drop him a line at peterdoyle215@gmail.com.

02 Redesigned Lily Pond garden, Garden in the Woods, before (top) and after. David Falk © Native Plant Trust

03 Ted Elliman, 2023 Volunteer Service Award recipient, © Ann Elliman

"Back to Art, Transformed"

Why Julie C. Baer Paints Plants

—By Jane Roy Brown, Writer-Editor

Painter Julie C. Baer, Native Plant Trust's 2023-2024 visiting artist, credits her artistic practice of close looking as her path to discovering native plants. "When we look closely, a different kind of meaning is made," she says.

Much of Baer's close looking takes place in the tangles of woods and marsh in conservation areas near her home in Cambridge, MA. "Alewife Brook Reservation is my go-to," she says. "This sweet place was carved out from under the mess of industry, including an electrical power station and commuter line tracks. It comprises a brook, a river, ponds, a wetland, and of course native plants and wildlife." Visiting regularly, Baer observes what plants look like in all phases of their life cycle—blooming, leafing, fruiting, seeding. Birds inhabit many of her paintings.

As her varied body of work shows, Baer's gaze is drawn to different patterns, colors, and textures depending on the season, the angle of light, or the holistic sense of place she feels in the moment. "Just going into the woods and looking, getting inspired by the plants and trees, you begin to paint plants that speak to you," she says. "We now know that trees communicate with each other through chemicals and vibrations. Why wouldn't they speak to us?"

Purple Joe-Pye Weed © Julie C. Baer

She notes that upon close inspection, plants do, in a way, speak to us. They reveal their individuality. But to notice these idiosyncrasies, she says, "you have to stop. Stopping is surprising. We expect a tree to look a certain way, as in identification books. But when you stop and really look, every single plant is different. For example, there's no real axial symmetry. Everything is in the process of becoming, changing, and balancing."

During her intimate observation, Baer started wondering what she was looking at. She downloaded an app to identify them, and before long, she was on a journey of discovery. "I discovered Doug Tallamy's Homegrown National Park project and started reading about it. Then I found Uli Lorimer's book, *The Northeast Native Plant Primer*. I connected with an organization called Grow Native Mass. I took a course with Native Plant Trust. Now I am a native plant gardener in my small urban yard."

And not just a gardener: "I've become a native plant proselytizer," Baer says. "At a recent dental appointment I found myself preaching to the hygienist about native plants. As I left, she called, 'Don't worry, I won't rake up the leaves!'"

Baer's paintings are richly colored and lively, capturing forms and patterns in bold lines reminiscent of woodblock prints. As she writes in the artist statement on her website (juliebaer.com), "Some works are close-ups of natural patterns, out of context: textures and shapes of multicolored lichens on a tree trunk, the pale underside of a flower, shadowed snow lying on a cold branch. Others gaze up at tree canopies interwoven with the early spring sky, an allover pattern without a traditional focal point, offering ongoing opportunities for discovery."

"But when you stop and really look, every single plant is different... Everything is in the process of becoming, changing, and balancing."

Though in recent years Baer has painted mainly plants, birds, and other wild things, earlier she also made portraits. An accomplished writer as well as a visual artist, she has written and illustrated two children's books, *Love Me Later* (2005) and *I Only Like What I Like* (2003), both from Bollix Books.

Her own childhood was painful. Baer suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder caused by a family tragedy. As a teenager, she experienced chronic pain and depression before discovering in a high school art class that she could draw. Drawing provided "a calling, a practice, a generativity, an identity. A self," as she writes. She attended RISD and graduated from the New School, after which she made art and exhibited full-time while raising her two sons. After returning to school in 2007 to pursue a master's (2009) and then a doctorate in education in 2018, Baer taught reading and writing to people of all backgrounds, from incumbent hospital workers and GED students to Boston University first-year students. During this period she took a break from painting. It lasted 15 years.

01

Then came 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic. "Providentially, that brought me back to art, transformed," Baer says. "My academic momentum slowed down during the pandemic, after which I couldn't get my momentum back, so I retired. But like a lot of other people, during the pandemic I forced myself to walk every day, whatever the weather, initially to compensate for the missed commutes. I started noticing plants by looking in people's gardens, then I began to look inside the flowers and finding they were each different, and super cool."

One day she accidentally shot a long exposure of a flower with her phone, and it produced a blur of color. "I started to do it intentionally, and I thought, oohh, I remember this, playing with color!" Baer says. "I would mess around with the images, and then paint them. Painting became an entirely different experience at this stage of my life compared to the angst of earlier days. It was core—something that I had missed during the 15 years. It was me. And making art has been like that ever since."

Native Plant Trust Director of Public Programs Bess Paupeck attended a show of Baer's work in Somerville, MA, in August 2023 and invited her to apply to the Visiting Artist Program based at Garden in the Woods (see sidebar). Since then, Baer has been exploring Garden in the Woods regularly. "I've been drawn to Hop Brook. And there are so many nurse logs in the woods covered with the most amazing mushrooms and fungi. I have already created 15 lichen paintings. I've painted tree trunks with turkey tail mushrooms and red-topped lichen called British soldiers," says Baer. "I love how the lichen and fungi can look like writing systems."

Baer's work often compresses space into a single picture plane or shifts the emphasis from figure to ground, and she relishes these departures from the conventions of Western painting. "I can learn so much by unlearning the rules I learned in art school. European art values depicting the world through single-point perspective, a two-dimensional technique intended to produce a sense of space that we have been taught to view as realistic," she says. "But since the beginning of time, other cultures have captured their worlds and landscapes in all different ways. I have learned that every being's perception and experience of nature is legitimate."

02

Native Plant Trust's Visiting Artist Program

Launched in 2022, the Native Plant Trust Visiting Artist Program invites local artists from all areas of the creative sphere to explore their art practice while working with and among the plants and landscapes of Garden in the Woods, in Framingham, MA, and the six Native Plant Sanctuaries across New England.

At the conclusion of their time with Native Plant Trust, the visiting artist presents the culmination of their work to the public in the form of an exhibition, performance, conversation, installation, and/or other means. Artist Julie C. Baer will exhibit her work under the title *Regarding Nature* at Garden in the Woods, with a free opening reception on October 5, 2024 (registration is required) followed by an artist talk on October 6. Sign up online at www.NativePlantTrust.org.

01 *Sweet Pepperbush* © Julie C. Baer

02 *Northern Bayberry* © Julie C. Baer

Roll Back Your Turf

How to reduce your lawn and choose native plants that work

—Jane Roy Brown, Writer-Editor, and Alexis Doshas, Nasami Farm Nursery Manager

Since our story "Your Lawn Is Killing Us" appeared in these pages in 2017, the lawn-alternative groundswell has gained momentum.

During the COVID pandemic, the "kill your lawn" idea caught a wave in the mainstream media, from the *New York Times* (2022) and the *Boston Globe* (2020, 2022) to the *Washington Post* (2023) and *Men's Journal* (2020)—which notably ran its "kill your lawn" story in the "Adventure" section.

Because the point of rolling back turf grass is to make room for native plants, the trend reveals how many people are grasping the importance of native plants. But in the post-lawn moment, many of us struggle with how to replace their turf grass, says Nasami Farm Nursery Manager Alexis Doshas.

"People are eager to do the right thing, but it can be hard to reimagine a space that has been the same for a long time," says Doshas, who, in her popular lecture Native Lawn Alternatives, has been guiding people through the transition from turf desert to habitat garden for seven years. "And if someone is just getting acquainted with native plants, they don't know what's out there and how the plants will work on their site." This can be true even for experienced gardeners who are used to working with exotic plants, she says.

If you fall into any of these categories, you're in luck, because Doshas has graciously agreed to share the key takeaways from her class here.

Wild blue phlox (*Phlox divaricata* ssp. *divaricata*), © Leslie Duthie

How to leave your lawn behind

TALK TO THE NEIGHBORS

The biggest reason why most of us cling to our lawns is because we fear what the neighbors will say. But they might change their minds when you explain why you're minimizing your turf. Start with 30,000 tons of pesticides applied annually in the US. We don't need to explain why this is not good.

Next, fertilizer: New England soils are too acidic for the European turf grasses sold for lawns, which is why they require so much fertilizer. Consider that the most fertilizer-intensive farm crop is sweet corn, at 2.5 pounds of fertilizer an acre. In Massachusetts alone, lawn services apply 5 to 7 pounds of fertilizer per acre of turf grass. Mowing produces air pollution, and homeowners also spill more gas a year (17 million gallons) than the oil spewn from the Exxon Valdez.

And as climate change brings more frequent droughts, we need to squeeze the spigot on the lawn, which now accounts for up to 60 percent of residential water use. Finally, if you are a bee or a firefly, a lawn is the habitat equivalent of a rock. Make that a poison rock.

TACKLE IT IN STAGES

Converting your entire lawn into a native plant garden at once can be overwhelming. Instead, tackle one area at a time. Start at the edges: Create garden borders around trees and along walks, driveways, and the house. Hard-to-mow slopes are ripe for replanting with native shrubs and groundcovers.

KEEP A PATCH OF TURF

You may no longer need to maintain an open field for a clear view of the enemy advancing toward your castle, but maybe your kids want a place to kick a soccer ball around, or your family enjoys sitting out in lawn chairs to watch fireflies.

CHOOSE HOW TO KILL YOUR GRASS

Herbicides are available, but we suggest other methods, in order of preference:

- Sheet mulch, laying down corrugated cardboard in thick layers, adding compost, straw, leaves, etc. Start it in fall, and it's ready to plant in spring.
- Just stop mowing and spot-treat or dig out weeds; overseed with perennial wildflowers and/or dig in seedlings or plugs.
- Dig out grass with a sod cutter, fork, and shovel. Take care not to lose soil clinging to the roots.
- Solarize with clear plastic to bake the roots and weed seeds. But this also kills soil organisms.

LEARN YOUR SITE CONDITIONS

The sunlight, soil type, and moisture levels of the site you have chosen for your first lawn-alternative bed will determine which plants will do well. See sidebar.

REPLACE TURF WITH NATIVE PLANTS

This is the post-lawn strategy. Native plants provide critical habitat for native pollinators and wildlife. When properly sited, they don't need fertilizer and irrigation, because they are adapted to New England's climate, soil, water, and ecology. They help to establish a unique sense of place. They are stunningly beautiful. Check, check, check, and check. But where to begin the transition from lawn to gardens? This is where lots of us get stuck.

Round-headed bush-clover (*Lespedeza capitata*), © Uli Lorimer

Right plant, right place

Your site conditions are your primary guide in picking the right plants, but choices still abound, so don't feel bad if you find yourself on a hamster wheel of indecision. After all, the more plants you know, the more plants you love. To get off the dime, see these suggestions from Alexis Doshas.

PENNSYLVANIA SEDGE
(*Carex pensylvanica*)

Pollinator powerhouse, host plant, suitable for urban environments, deer and rabbit resistant, most turf-like aesthetic.

- Height: 8″–10″
- Spreads by rhizome
- Light: sun–part shade
- Moisture: average–dry soil

APPALACHIAN SEDGE
(*Carex appalachica*)

Pollinator powerhouse, host plant, deer and rabbit resistant.

- Height: 8″–10″
- Clump spread: 10″–14″
- Light: sun–part shade
- Moisture: average–dry soil

PURPLE LOVE GRASS
(*Eragrostis spectabilis*)

Drought tolerant, suitable for urban environments, salt tolerant, deer and rabbit resistant, summer bloom, low maintenance.

- Height: 8″–14″
- Clump spread: 10″–16″
- Light: sun–part shade
- Moisture: dry–average soil

WAVY HAIR GRASS
(*Deschampsia flexuosa*)

Salt tolerant; summer bloom; host plant; neat habit; thin leaves; arching, delicate flower spikes; semi-evergreen.

- Height: 24–36″ (flower)
- Clump spread: 12″–24″
- Light: part shade–shade
- Moisture: average soil

LITTLE BLUESTEM
(*Schizachyrium scoparium*)

Fall foliage, attracts wildlife, host plant, salt and drought tolerant, deer and rabbit resistant, low maintenance.

- Height: 12″–48″
- Clump spread: 8″–24″
- Light: sun–part shade
- Moisture: average–dry soil

COMMON STRAWBERRY
(*Fragaria virginiana*)

Spring bloom, summer fruit, fall foliage, attracts songbirds, pollinator powerhouse, host plant, salt and drought tolerant, deer and rabbit resistant, low maintenance.

- Height: 2″–5″
- Spreading 12″–24″
- Light: sun–part shade
- Moisture: average–dry soil

THREE-TOOTHED-CINQUEFOIL
(*Sibbaldiopsis tridentata*)

Spring bloom, evergreen, fall color, fruit, attracts bees and other pollinators, compaction tolerant, drought tolerant, deer and rabbit resistant.

- Height: 4″–6″
- Spreading 8″–18″
- Light: sun
- Moisture: dry soil

BLUE-EYED-GRASS
(*Sisyrinchium angustifolium*)

Summer bloom, fall/winter fruit, attracts bees and other pollinators, attracts songbirds, low maintenance.

- Height: 6″–18″
- Spreading: 6″–8″
- Light: sun–part shade
- Moisture: average–wet soil

STONECROP SEDUM
(*Sedum ternatum*)

Spring bloom, attracts bees and other pollinators, host plant, attracts songbirds, drought tolerant, low maintenance, edible.

- Height: 4″–8″
- Spreading 8″–12″
- Light: sun–part shade
- Moisture: average–dry soil

WILD BLUE PHLOX
(*Phlox divaricata*)

Spring bloom, attracts bees, attracts butterflies and other pollinators, host plant, low maintenance, fragrant.

- Height: 10″–14″
- Spreading:12″–16″
- Light: part shade–shade
- Moisture: average

PUSSYTOES
(*Antennaria neglecta*)

Spring bloom, attracts bees and other pollinators, host plant, attracts songbirds, drought tolerant, low maintenance, edible.

- Height: 1″–3″
- Spreading 6″–12″
- Light: sun–part shade
- Moisture: average–dry soil

BEARBERRY OR KINNICKINICK
(*Arctostaphylos uva ursi*)

Spring bloom, summer fruit, fall foliage, evergreen, attracts songbirds, bees, and other pollinators, deer and rabbit resistant, salt and drought tolerant.

- Height: 3″–6″
- Spreading 2'–3'
- Light: sun
- Moisture: average–dry soil

RUNNING FOAM FLOWER
(*Tiarella cordifolia v. cordifolia*)

Spring bloom, attracts bees and other pollinators, host plant, suitable for urban environments, deer and rabbit resistant, low maintenance.

- Height: 3″–12″
- Spreading:12″–24″
- Light: part shade–shade
- Moisture: average

WILD GINGER
(*Asarum canadense*)

Spring bloom, attracts pollinators, deer and rabbit resistant.

- Height: 3″–6″
- Spreading: 12″–16″
- Light: sun–part shade
- Moisture: wet–average

Study Your Site

LOCATE YOUR HARDINESS ZONE

Enter “2024 USDA Hardiness Zone Map” in your browser's search field. (If you haven't checked your zone recently, you might see differences in the 2024 map.) Find the zone where you live. When you buy plants, check the hardiness zone on the label. Choose plants hardy to the next full or half-zone lower than the one you live in.

HAND-TEST YOUR SOIL TYPE

Rub a small amount of moist soil between your fingers. If it feels coarse and gritty, the soil is predominantly sand. Smooth and velvety? It is most likely silt. If it clings together and feels sticky, it is largely clay. Next, squeeze a moist soil clod in your hand. If the clod doesn't crumble or change shape, it is likely heavy clay. If the clod breaks into particles, it is predominantly sand. Loam soils tend to stay together when squeezed and change shape easily.

Clay soils require plants that can withstand wet or flooded conditions. For sandy soils, pick plants that are adapted to dry, nutrient-poor soils. For loam, or relatively even concentrations of sand, silt, and clay, get plants for average soil.

CHECK YOUR SUNLIGHT

This is what the light requirements on your plant labels mean:

Full sun = more than six hours of direct sunlight a day

Part shade = three to six hours of sunlight a day

Full shade = less than three hours of direct sunlight a day

MONITOR MOISTURE

Note markedly wet or dry areas of your yard, especially places that stay wet for hours or days after rain. These extreme areas require plants adapted to those conditions.

Out of the Tropics

Neela de Zoysa, global botanist

—By Jane Roy Brown, Writer-Editor

Botanist and plant ecologist Neela de Zoysa has been a popular Native Plant Trust botany instructor since 2011. In her native Sri Lanka, Neela spent a decade conducting research in that country's highly biodiverse rainforest. As one of the first women in the Sri Lankan Forest Department, she did pioneering work to bring wild bamboo and rattan (climbing palm) species into cultivation.

After her graduate training at Oxford University, UK, she completed the taxonomic revision of the Sri Lankan palms. Neela's tropical background brings a unique perspective to her teaching about New England plants. Her current research on climbers of the northeastern US was supported by a Les Mehrhoff Award from the New England Botanical Society in 2022.

"I mentor my students, and their love of learning is my greatest joy."

Native Plant News: How did you come to be a botanist?

Neela de Zoysa: My love of plants was instilled by my father, an avid gardener. As was typical of his generation, he enjoyed flower gardening and growing fruit trees, whereas I directed my interest in plants to conserving what was left of Sri Lanka's rainforests. As an undergraduate, I was captivated by a visit to the Sinharaja Rain Forest, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. I owe a debt of gratitude to my teachers and mentors in Sri Lanka.

NPN: How did you re-engage with your botany career in this part of the world?

NdZ: When you immigrate to a new place, nobody knows who you were in the place where you came from. Lots of doors were closed to me. In 2010 I took Wildflowers of New England, Native Plant Trust's flagship course, a comprehensive introduction to native herbaceous plants. It was taught by Frances Clark, the former staff botanist who created our certificate programs and envisioned the New England Plant Conservation Program. Later that year, Frances moved away and asked me to teach this course, an opportunity for which I remain grateful. She was an important role model, along with other instructors including Ted Elliman. Native Plant Trust has earned its strong reputation in botanical education because of people like this. In return, I mentor my students, and their love of learning is my greatest joy.

NPN: How did you acquaint yourself with this region's plants?

NdZ: My first exposure to New England plants was at the Great Meadows and Assabet River National Wildlife Refuges near my home west of Boston. My curiosity grew from there, intrigued by the contrasts. In the tropics, the greatest diversity is among the woody plants. Tropical flowers are big and bold, and lianas abound. In New England, herbaceous plant diversity dominates, and the wildflowers are delicate and tiny.

NPN: How did you come up with ideas for the courses you've added to our roster, such as native roses, milkweeds, evergreens, orchids, climbers, carnivorous and parasitic plants, among others?

NdZ: As an outsider, I find the region's common plants fascinating, and I enjoy introducing people to the common plants that surround them. The orchids and climbers classes are inspired by my tropical roots. One of my happiest accomplishments was helping to resurrect the online course Plants 101, created in 2015 by the late Dr. Elizabeth Farnsworth, who was a fantastic botanist and communicator. She personalized the lessons by recording herself. When Elizabeth died suddenly, in 2017, the personal elements caused the course to be shelved. I revised it, and it is being offered once again.

Left: Yellow lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium parviflorum* var. *parviflorum*) © Uli Lorimer
Top: Neela de Zoysa © Liza Green

01

Show your unwavering commitment to native plants

02

—By Tracey Willmott, Director of Philanthropy

In a world of unpredictable disruptions, the support of our regular monthly donors—whether for seed banking, habitat protection, or educational programs—serves as an anchor of stability and a source of optimism.

Each month, these generous contributions underpin our work, helping to care for New England's life-sustaining native plants, promoting their ecological importance, and fostering understanding and appreciation of them throughout the region.

Recurring donations demonstrate your unwavering commitment to conserving and promoting New England's native plants. Recurring gifts are not just charitable donations; they are a personal statement of your enduring belief in the fundamental importance of nature, ecological balance, and preservation of diverse species.

Monthly donations provide a sustainable stream of funding that enables us to plan more effectively. It is also uplifting for everyone at Native Plant Trust to know that we have dedicated friends, whose regular contributions keep us moving forward, day by day and month by month. We are immensely grateful for this loyal support, which makes such a great impact on habitat protection, plant propagation, and educational programs.

I invite you to realize your own potential to make a difference. Set up your own recurring monthly donation today and share an ongoing commitment to conserving New England's native plants.

Please call or email: 774-519-5553/gifts@NativePlantTrust.org

"Knowing that I am supporting rare seed banking throughout the year, in all the seasons and stages—researching, collecting, cleaning, storing, studying, and sharing knowledge—is hugely rewarding for me."

—Catherine Michaud, monthly donor

01 Blue-eyed-grass (*Sisyrinchium* sp.), © Native Plant Trust

02 Catherine Michaud, courtesy Dominque Michaud

Celebrating You...

What your amazing commitment to nature means

Thank you to everyone who understands that plants are the cornerstones of our planet and whose financial support has helped conserve and promote New England's native plants. We especially want to recognize those of you who have made Native Plant Trust one of your philanthropic priorities.

Thanks to a generous bequest from a long-time member, we were able to install new informational signs at our six native plant sanctuary properties.

Photo: Sanctuary Committee Volunteers Jim Wickis and Bruce Patterson at the Hobbs Fern Sanctuary in Lyman, New Hampshire. © Frederick C. Sechler, Jr, Native Plant Trust

CONSERVATION CIRCLE AND LEADERSHIP GIFTS

The total giving noted here is for fiscal year 2023, ending December 31, and reflects restricted and unrestricted gifts, membership dues, and pledges. Our Conservation Circle honors individuals whose generous support reached $1,000 or more. Leadership gifts and grants from companies and foundations also had an extraordinary impact.

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† Denotes deceased donors

Thanks to the support of a foundation that wishes to remain anonymous, we have been able to build a facility to house bulk-seed processing at our Nasami Farm native plant nursery in Whately, MA. The building will be part of the infrastructure for the new Northeast Seed Network. Alexis Doshas © Native Plant Trust

$5,000 – $9,999

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At Garden in the Woods, new bridges and boardwalks along Hop Brook have been installed with funding from several individual donors, the Hope Goddard Iselin Foundation, and the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund, a program of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, administered through a collaborative arrangement between MassDevelopment and the Mass Cultural Council. Tracey Willmott © Native Plant Trust

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Jennifer and Carlo Favazza

Many hands really do make light work, especially when removing invasive plants at Garden in the Woods! The hard-working staff of OXO (Helen of Troy) kept smiling throughout their volunteer day, and we say a giant "thank you" for their mighty efforts to help keep our botanic garden in pristine condition for more than 20,000 people a year to enjoy. Erik Sechler © Native Plant Trust

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Steven and Merle Winer

Each year, funded by generous friends like you, Native Plant Trust's horticulture staff and interns maintain the native plant garden at the Pinkham Notch Visitor Center on Mt. Washington in New Hampshire. Enjoyed by guests from around the country and the world, this garden is often a visitor's introduction to the native plants of New England. Can you help keep this project going by funding our intern program? Call us at 774-519-5571 and thank you!

From left to right; Sophie Lurz, Erin Hammes, Cole Campbell, Miho Connolly, Elias Keller, Kurt Dietrich. Erin Hammes © Native Plant Trust

LIFE MEMBERS

These dedicated individuals have chosen to play a long-term role in the preservation of New England's native plants by becoming life members.

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Christine M. Gradijan
Marjorie D. and Nicholas P. Greville
Barbara A. and Charles A. Grunden
Ervina Hamilton

Upon her retirement as Executive Director of Native Plant Trust, Debbi Edelstein was presented with a life membership by the Board of Trustees in honor of her 15 years of outstanding leadership, building the incredible foundation that underlies our ambitious vision.

Dena and G. F. Hardymon
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TRILLIUM SOCIETY

To help ensure our future ability to conserve native plants and their habitats, the following generous friends have included us in their estate plans.

Anonymous (18)
Elizabeth L. Aghajanian
Annemarie Altman
Raymond A. Bisson
Lalor Burdick
William J. Claff
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MATCHING GIFT COMPANIES

We extend special thanks to these businesses, and their employees, for their generous support in 2023.

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Point32Health Foundation Inc.
TripAdvisor LLC
Takeda Pharmaceutical Company

TRIBUTES

In 2023 we received honoraria or memorial donations in tribute to the following friends, colleagues, mentors, and loved ones.

In Honor of

Peter Blewett
Gena Bronson
Ralph Brown
Diana Conroy
Sandra Crystall
Arabella S. Dane
Jane A. Desforges
Debbi Edelstein
David Falk
James Frantzreb
Karro Frost
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Peggy Spaeth and John C. Barber
Lisa Tam
Alicia and Brianna Tripoli

In Memory of

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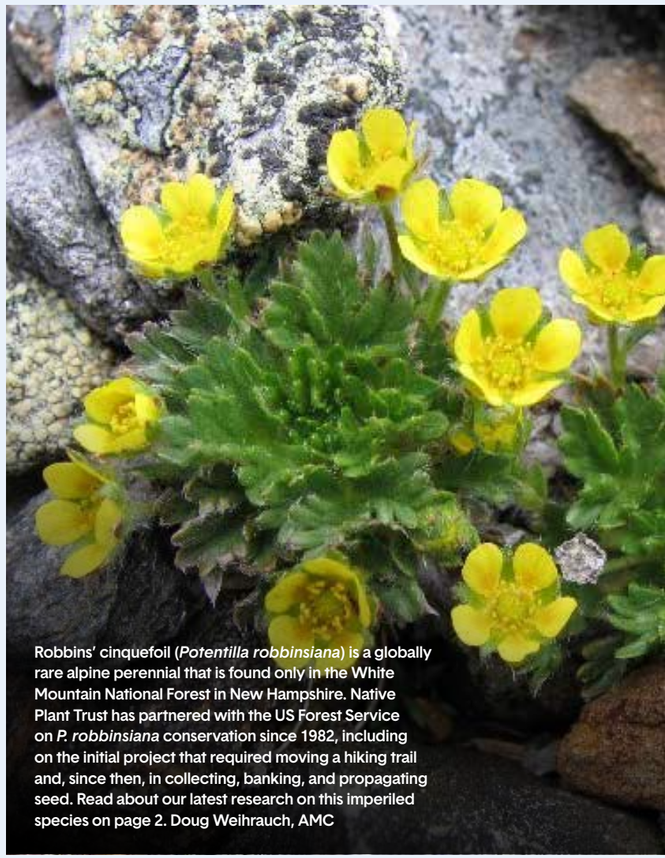
Mary Ann Streeter
Dorothy Sullivan
Margot Turano
Gray H. Wexelblat

GIFTS-IN-KIND

Gifts-in-kind uniquely allowed us to expand our programmatic impact in 2022.

Douglas Johnson
Sharon and Brad Malt
Patricia Seitz



Robbins' cinquefoil (*Potentilla robbinsiana*) is a globally rare alpine perennial that is found only in the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire. Native Plant Trust has partnered with the US Forest Service on *P. robbinsiana* conservation since 1982, including on the initial project that required moving a hiking trail and, since then, in collecting, banking, and propagating seed. Read about our latest research on this imperiled species on page 2. Doug Weihrauch, AMC

Funded by amazing anonymous donors, the Visiting Artist Program at Native Plant Trust was launched in 2023 with original work by composer and video artist Christine Southworth. A portion of her photo assemblage "156 Mushrooms" appears above. © Christine Southworth

Rare Plant Spotlight

Big-toothed Canada Goldenrod (*Solidago fallax*)

—Arthur Haines, Senior Research Botanist

It is relatively rare that a botanist would encounter a species not included in any regional contemporary floras multiple times over a broad area within a single field season, but that is exactly what happened with big-toothed Canada goldenrod (*Solidago fallax*) during my 2023 rare plant surveys. Fallax, which means “deceptive” in Latin, is a fitting name for this species, because although it has been mentioned in New England in an older flora of the region, the few records of its collection by earlier botanists, mostly in the early 1900s, remain unverified.

The reasons for overlooking a relatively conspicuous member of the composite family are several, but *Solidago fallax* belongs to a complex of goldenrods that are difficult to identify. This complex, called subsection *Triplenerviae*, contains species that are similar in their leaf blades, which feature three prominent nerves that run much of the length of the leaf. In the field, several of the species look superficially similar and are easy to pass over as common. In this case, *S. fallax* is identifiable, in part, by tiny, stalked glands on the bracts that surround the flowers of each flower head, which require about 20× magnification to see clearly.

I first observed *S. fallax* in a clearing in western Maine, a region that is a transitional boreal forest. Once learning the morphology, I then observed it in several other places in northern and western Maine. The latter locations lay at somewhat higher elevation, parallel conditions to those in the northern sightings. I found it in clearings and along gravel logging roads. While its abundance in New England is still unknown, I made seven collections over a large area of Maine, suggesting that it may be more widespread than the botanical community has recognized.

Please support the work of our conservation botanists with a donation to Native Plant Trust. www.NativePlantTrust.org/support. Thank you.

Big-toothed Canada goldenrod (*Solidago fallax*), © Arthur Haines

Happy 73rd Birthday!

This special milestone means you must start taking your required minimum distribution (RMD) from your individual retirement account (IRA). Call your account representative to designate Native Plant Trust as the charitable beneficiary of all or part of your RMD, and save native plants while responsibly managing your personal tax position. Or use FreeWill's secure online form, which will auto-complete your paperwork for you.

Visit FreeWill.com/SmartGiving/NPT or scan the QR code.

Please note: This is general information and is not presented as specific legal or tax advice.

CHANGĪNG SEASONS

Astonished by Aphids

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ARABELLA DANE, GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

We think of aphids as pests. They bore into plants to feed on sap, depleting plant sugars and potentially injecting pathogens. After feeding, aphids excrete sweet “honeydew,” which certain kinds of ants collect and feed to their offspring. Such ants have a “farming” relationship with aphids, protecting them to collect the honeydew.

I was photographing water lilies in a bog when I noticed tiny dark spots on some of the lily pads. The spots turned out to be aphids (*Rhopalosiphum nymphaeae*) in all life phases. Honey bees were landing only on the lily pads with the aphids. The bees appeared to be slurping up liquid near the aphids, which looked like rainwater. But when the lily pads were dry, the bees were still visiting the parts of the lily pads where the aphids were feasting. The upper abdomens of bees that lingered longest at the honeydew appeared to swell and grow more translucent. These bees even seemed to have difficulty getting airborne!

Research confirmed that bees, too, imbibe honeydew, especially at the end of the season, when pollen and nectar are scarce. The aphids on the lily pads feed specifically on water lilies and lay eggs on their alternative host plants in the genus *Prunus*.

Observing these relationships, I learned that even pests can play a role in keeping complex ecosystems in balance. To keep pollinators healthy, we need to understand these relationships and learn more about each organism involved.

Bee sipping fluid on an aphid-strewn lily pad, © Arabella Dane

Native Plant Trust

Conserving and promoting New England's native plants

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321 Commonwealth Road, Suite 204
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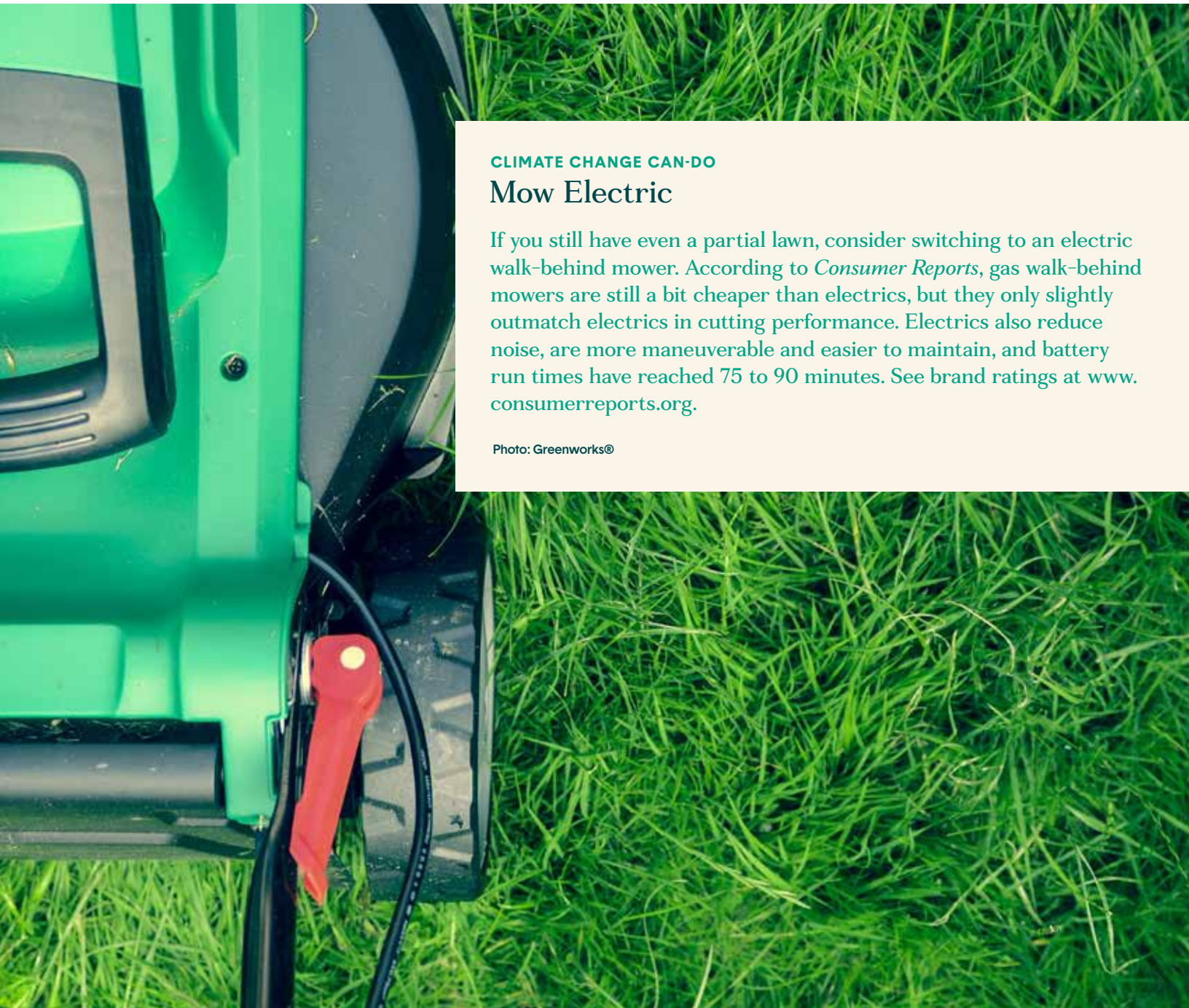

CLIMATE CHANGE CAN-DO

Mow Electric

If you still have even a partial lawn, consider switching to an electric walk-behind mower. According to *Consumer Reports*, gas walk-behind mowers are still a bit cheaper than electrics, but they only slightly outmatch electrics in cutting performance. Electrics also reduce noise, are more maneuverable and easier to maintain, and battery run times have reached 75 to 90 minutes. See brand ratings at www.consumerreports.org.

Photo: Greenworks®