



## Ardsley Cross Pollination News

### February 2024 - *The Unsung Heroes of the Night*



***Wow! What a beauty!***

My job this month is to persuade you to think about, appreciate, marvel at, love, and support...moths. Yes, moths. Not the ones that decimate your wool and cashmere sweaters; for [those are only two](#) of over 1,500 species in the northeast. I am hoping you'll put away that bug zapper, electrified fly swatter, and shoe when you see one of these marvelous and critical night visitors. I wish you'll gently capture, release, and wish well the moths that mistakenly find themselves in your house.

These unsung heroes of the night are some of the mightiest pollinators. In fact, [recent research](#) has shown that they are more efficient pollinators than day-flying pollinators. They also need a PR representative because the public image of them is, well, drab. Say "moth" and most people think of a brown, frumpy, small thing that flies around lights at night. Not true - as you will see!

[Moth populations are severely declining](#), particularly the large-sized moth populations. These cousins of butterflies have the same survival needs: host plants, nectar plants, no pesticides, and a native habitat. If you are providing those to day-flying pollinators you are supporting the night workers too. Moths are also affected by our growing light pollution, which is killing them through both easier predation and exhaustion. Please turn down or turn off those lights, use yellow or amber lights (less attractive to insects) and, even better, use motion sensitive lights outdoors.

Meet some of our spectacular local moths after the event page - I know you will fall in love with them and seek to find them and support them. This is the perfect time to love a moth - spring is your opportunity to plant some of the host plants for your favorites. Then enjoy the night show.

## UPCOMING EVENTS



**Easy Native Trees For Your Yard. Thursday, February 1 at 7:30, Zoom**

*and*

**Easy Native Shrubs For Your Yard. Thursday, February 8 at 7:30, Zoom**

We are thrilled to have nationally renowned landscape designer and native plant expert Carolyn Summers present easy native trees and shrubs for your yard. There is a native tree and shrub for every situation, height requirement, and use. Fall in love with our gorgeous native trees and shrubs and help pollinators, birds, and wildlife by including natives on your property. ***These webinars will not be recorded.***

**Easy Native Trees For Your Yard:** [Click here to register.](#)  
**Easy Native Shrubs For Your Yard.** [Click here to register.](#)



**Ardsey Spring Gardening Festival!**

**Sunday, March 10, noon - 4:30 pm, Ardsley Community Center**

Mark your calendars!! Arts, crafts, gardening seminars, free plant and seed giveaways, native plant plug pre-orders, free gardening consultations, houseplant urgent care, and much more! Have fun, be inspired, leave with information and ideas. More info to come - for now block the date and time. All ages invited - activities and fun for everyone.



**Dangers of Pesticides**

**Tuesday, March 12, 6 pm - 7 pm, Zoom**

This informative and important presentation, a collaboration of the Greenburgh Conservation Advisory Council and The Greenburgh Library, explores the world of everyday pesticides used by homeowners and gardeners that may cause serious health effects in children, adults, and pets. Sarah Evans, PhD MPH, Assistant Professor of Environmental Medicine and Public Health Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, will share the latest science on how common pesticides impact health, children's unique vulnerability, and steps that families can take to reduce pesticide exposures. [Register here](#) **Space is limited.**

**is limited.**

## Our Gorgeous Local Moths (or the moth red carpet)

There are more than 482 moths in New York State (and not all only appear at night). You can see them all [here](#). I've shown you some of my favorites for the moth beauty contest - and tell you how you can support them with host plants.



**Cecropia Silk Moth**

Oaks, cherry, beech, apple, buttonbush



**Clymene Haploa Moth**

Oaks, willows, and various herbs (Eupatorium)



**Giant Leopard Moth**

Wide variety of host plants--including violets, plantains, dandelion, cherries, maples, and willows



**Garden Tiger Moth**

A wide variety of herbaceous plants, including Common Nettle, Broad-leaved Dock, Water Dock, burdocks, Hound's-tongue, and many garden plants.



**Hummingbird Moth**

A wide host range. Some of the plants utilized as host plants: apple, evening primrose, four-o'clocks, grape, pentas, purslane, tomato, willow-weed, honeysuckle, and viburnum



**Io Moth**

Hackberry, willow, mesquite, redbud, currant, blackberry, pear, wild cherries, sassafras, elm, oak, grasses.



**Luna Moth**

Hickory, walnut, sweet-gum, persimmon, sumac, and birch



**Mint-loving Pyrausta Moth**

Plants of the mint family



**One-eyed Sphinx Moth**

Poplar, willow, pear, and plum





**Ornate Bella Moth**  
Usually feed on *Crotalaria*  
species (native Rattlebox)



**Polyphemus Moth**  
Apple, ash, birch, dogwood, elm,  
hazel, hickory, maple, rose, and  
willow



**Parthenice Tiger Moth**  
Dandelion, ironweed, thistles  
(mostly Asteraceae)



**Primrose Moth**  
Primroses



**Reversed Haploa Moth**  
May not be dependent on a  
unique host plant



**Scarlet-winged Lichen  
Moth**  
Lichens growing on trees,  
especially pine trees; bark  
algae, and Cyanobacteria



**Dot-lined White Moth**  
Oak, cherry, and rose trees



**Showy Emerald Moth**  
Sumac and poison ivy



**The Joker**  
Hemlock

If you want to learn more about butterflies and moths in your garden I recommend *Raising Butterflies and Moths in the Garden* by Brenda Dziedzic. It is a great (and easy reference) and covers the host plant for each species.



## Who is that sexy bee?!

Well, that is often my question while bee watching. Great news, there is an easy online guide to help you identify that sexy gal. Identify 50 common bees here: [Bees of The Northeast - Bee Watching \(watchingbees.com\)](http://watchingbees.com)



## More reasons to love native plants and oaks

[Great news!](#) Deep rooted native plants are resilient to Asian Jumping Worms and, even better, the worms don't like oak leaf litter. As if that wasn't enough good news, Japanese Stiltgrass, another invasive nightmare, does poorly in oak leaf litter. More reason to plant native, plant and nurture oaks, leave your leaves, and value your oak leaf litter. If you think you have Asian Jumping Worms, this is a great site on how to control them: [Jumping Worms in Connecticut](#).



## Winter sowing is not just for native plants

We're in the middle of [native plant winter seed sowing](#) season. Did you know you can sow more than native plants in the winter? Cool season vegetables and annuals can be sown in plastic containers now. Check out [this guide to learn more](#) about plants that can be winter sown and how to do it.



## Use your spent coffee grounds

Coffee grounds are a [great amendment to the garden and for houseplants](#). They can be added to seed starting soil, flower pots, compost piles, and gardens. A nutritious plant 'tea' can be made from the used grounds and they can help deter some fungi pests. Used coffee grounds can help to improve soil by adding organic matter and minerals. They increase soil acidity so they are a great amendment for plants like blueberries. They will slowly release nitrogen into the soil and act as a 'green' addition in your compost pile. So [enjoy your used coffee twice](#) - to fuel you in the morning and fuel your plants.



## Lure hummingbirds

Ditch the sugar water - open a [diverse hummingbird cafe instead](#). You and the hummingbirds will have more fun. You could create a garden just for hummingbirds - not only would it be beautiful, but it would support many other pollinators and birds. Here are just a few hummingbird magnets: cardinal flower, columbine, trumpet honeysuckle, the beebalms, great blue lobelia, penstemons, red buckeye, crabapple, summersweet, redbud, hyssops, coneflower, phlox, indian pink, firepink, butterfly milkweed, yarrow, coral bells, obedient plant, viburnums, and more. They also love annuals like lantana, cleome, petunia, impatiens, salvia, flowering tobacco, nasturtiums - and more. Now's the time to plan your hummingbird garden. Perform an internet search on native plants for hummingbirds to get a complete list.



## Viability of seeds and a seed starting master class

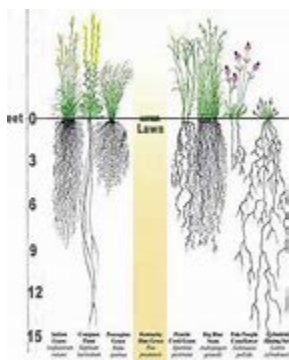
If you are like me you have lots of seeds leftover after the planting season. Don't throw them out - they are probably good for years. [This article](#) gives you guidance on seed viability and explains a simple test you can perform to discover the viability of your seeds. Then improve your success rate sowing seeds indoors through [this masterclass article](#).



## Plants communicate!

Here is [some exciting research](#) that has just been published. Japanese scientists have proven what gardeners always knew - plants communicate. They actually filmed the process of plants warning fellow plants of danger. This, of course, makes me wonder what they are saying to each other about my stewardship of them...hmmmm.





## Native plants for compacted soil

[Compacted soil](#) prevents water absorption and natural air pockets. It also makes it hard to dig. Soil compaction occurs for many reasons: high traffic on the soil, heavy equipment, working soil when it is wet, leafblowers, lack of organic matter feeding the soil, and more. Clay soil is often compacted soil and many plants are not tolerant of it. Good news! Many native plants not only will survive in compacted soil but will also work to break it up for you. Plants such as coneflower, beebalm, little bluestem, blue false indigo, ostrich fern, blazing star and aster not only can grow in compacted soil but improve the soil as they grow. See [this in depth list of native plants](#) that grow in and remediate compacted soil, including clay. Don't sweat it - let the plants work for you!



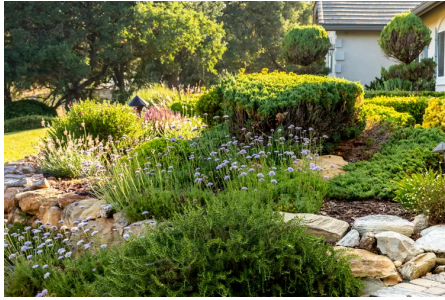
## Attracting birds to your yard

I have written and spoken about how to attract birds to your yard several times, but [this article](#) I found is so succinct and spot-on I wanted to share it. If you feed birds during the winter, or plan to start, check out [the best birdfeeders for the winter](#). If you need seed, support the Bronx River Sound Shore Audubon Chapter through [their winter seed sale](#). They have generously partially funded all of our public pollinator gardens (thank you BRSS!)



## Don't raise monarch butterflies in captivity

A reminder that raising monarchs in captivity and releasing them [harms the population](#). Outside of raising a monarch or two as part of a science class or educational experience, raising them in captivity and releasing them with the intent to save them is actually dooming them. Raising monarchs in confined areas increases the spread of a [deadly naturally occurring monarch parasite](#) *Ophryocystis elektroscirrha* (OE). Planting non-native tropical milkweed also [jeopardizes monarchs](#). The best approach to save them is to create monarch habitat by planting native milkweed, native nectar perennials, their favorite annuals, and to stop using pesticides and herbicides.



## How trendy are we?!

We are ahead of our time. The Spruce just announced the [hot new garden trends of 2024](#). We can check most of the boxes: native plants, meadows, eco-lawns, a riot of color, using technology to save water, perennials, and resilient plants. Glad everyone else is catching up to us!



## Soil pH explained...understandably

Confused about soil pH? Or do you sort of understand it but would be hard pressed to explain what it is or what determines it? pH is very important and part of the 'right plant, right place' success guideline. [This article](#) does a fantastic job of explaining what it is, what determines it, how to measure it, and why it is important. It made me realize that I use the term pH frequently with little understanding of what is behind it. Now I know!

Each Garden Kit contains one tray of 72 plant "plugs"



This is an example of a Garden Kit - plant sizes may vary



## Make life easy with pollinator packs to start the garden

One of the barriers people face when starting a pollinator garden is knowing what plants to choose. Another barrier is sourcing the plants. An easy solution to both of these barriers is to buy pollinator plant packs - let someone else select the plants for the conditions and ship them to you. There are a number of vendors that offer these packets. The DEC [Saratoga Tree Nursery](#) offers different wildlife/pollinator packs of bare root trees and shrubs. [Prairie Moon Nursery](#), [Prairie Nursery](#), [Blazing Star Gardens](#), and [The Native Plant Trust](#) all offer plant kits to start a pollinator garden of various sizes and for a variety of conditions. Locally [Plant Me A Rainbow](#) also carries pollinator packs that will be delivered to your doorstep. These are only a few of the vendors that offer pollinator packets.





## Is your yard undergrown?

Nancy Lawson is one of my favorite native landscape writers and she had me yelling ‘yes!’ while reading [her latest article](#). Words matter and reveal our biases and paradigms about landscape aesthetics (and more). By changing the words that we use we can open our eyes to a different and more sustainable reality that includes and supports all beings.



## Ending on good news

Is what we are doing making a difference? Anecdotally we say yes, and now science is backing up our own observations. [Recent research](#) on a win-win formula, solar farms planted with native plant meadows, demonstrated “... increases in the abundance and diversity of native insect pollinators and agriculturally beneficial insects, which included honeybees, native bees, wasps, hornets, hoverflies, other flies, moths, butterflies and beetles. Flowers and flowering plant species increased as well. Total insect abundance tripled, while native bees showed a 20-fold increase in numbers.” Keep planting!

## ACCESS PREVIOUS NEWSLETTERS AND INFO SESSIONS



Previous Newsletters and information, recordings, references and presentations from our monthly get togethers are available. Just [click here](#).

Thank you for all you are doing to support our endangered pollinators and ecosystem! Please feel free to forward this newsletter to other interested (or potentially interested) people. Let's grow the pathway!

**The Ardsley Pollinator Pathway Team:** *Rebecca Arkin, Linda Azif, Savannah Donohue, Kathy Evers, Julie Larkin, Jen Nordhem, Dina Patterson, Carol Sommerfield (Chair)*

**The Veggie Gardening Mania Team:** *Ruchi Agarwal, Linda Caldwell, Carol Sommerfield*

Visit our [Ardsley Pollinator Pathway website](#) for inspiration and how-to guides.

If this email was forwarded to you, [visit our site](#) to subscribe to our newsletter or add your garden to our map. To unsubscribe, [email us](#) with “unsubscribe” as the email subject.

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