



The LAUREL

*Connecticut
Master
Gardener
Association
Newsletter*

Spring 2024 Volume 37, No. 2

The Joy of Native Plants



Buttonbush

Read About

**Why choose native plants?
Foundation plant substitutes
Ballard Native Garden Grant**

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President's Message



Dear CMGA Members:

What a spring we have had so far! As I write this, the sun is pouring into the house and I can see magnolia blossoms, crocus and daffodils joining the hellebores in letting me know that spring has arrived. Earlier this week many of us were lucky to be able to witness the rare solar eclipse that passed over New England. What a wonderful time of year!

I hope that you were able to attend our annual Gardening Symposium on March 9. This year's speakers addressed the theme of resiliency, and the varied presentations were inspirational as well as informative. I can't wait to get a chance to get into the garden to put what I learned into practice!

Looking ahead to the coming months, we continue to offer a wide range of exciting in-person as well as virtual events to our members. This month we have a free virtual presentation on April 16th, given by George Trecina, that will focus on pruning, followed in May and June by garden tours at Sleepy Cat Farm (May 1st) and Bellamy Ferriday House (June 4th). CMGA is again partnering with the Connecticut Science Center for *MakeFest/Make it Grow* on May 18th. Included in this educational event will be a plant sale featuring native plants and vegetables. We hope you will help by donating native and sustainable perennials and veggies. Contact us at makefest@ctmga.org for more information and to arrange plant donation pick-ups.

Another exciting plant day I look forward to every year is at McCue Gardens. On Wednesday, June 12 we will return again to McCue Gardens of Wethersfield for our annual Plant sale. Once again, owners Cindy and Bruce McCue will donate a percentage of all sales that day to CMGA. We hope to see you there!

In closing, I want to thank all of our members for their continued support of our organization. The money we raise through fund-raising efforts such as the plant sales mentioned above and from membership dues allows us to support the UConn Master Gardener program through scholarships and direct grants to each extension center. It always provides the support for numerous outreach projects around the state. This year, we moved up our grant cycle to allow potential recipients a chance to plan their projects a bit earlier. We had a record number of applications and were able to fund 13 proposals. Our second round will open on April 15th with applications due on May 15. Check our website to learn more about these exciting projects.

I hope you will continue to check our website regularly to learn more about upcoming events and initiatives. With best wishes to all for another happy and healthy gardening season!

Paula Russo, President, CMGA

2024 CMGA Annual Symposium Well Attended

Our fifth virtual Symposium was well attended by over 150 viewers.



Amy Harder UCONN Extension Presenter



Tribute to Marge Bingham

Jean Fletcher
&
Debby Rosen

Nancy Lawson explained the
Scentscape, Soundscape, Touchscape, Tastescape, and Sightscape



Nurturing the Scentscape

- Plant from local seed or buy local ecotypes
- Include large-flowered blooms
- Include strongly scented blooms
- Don't use fertilizers or pesticides



Tradd Cotter had a fascinating presentation on fungi in our environment

Kim Shearer presented the benefit of woody plants to human environment



Tom Christopher shared Breakthroughs in Environmentally Friendly Gardens

Why Native Plants?

By Susan St. John
Communication Committee

Pollinators need us more than ever and this is our chance to help them by growing a plant native to our region.

Just as in planting any plant, we need to remember: “right plant, right place”. The tags that are attached to each plant provide a good indication of conditions under which that plant will thrive. This is also true with native plants. Native plants provide nectar for pollinators, including bees, birds, hummingbirds, butterflies, moths, and even bats. Native plants are local and have been growing in a particular region for years.



Spicebush

Top reasons for growing native plants include:

1. Natives, adapted to their local environment, **save water** by requiring less watering.
2. Native plants do well with just organic compost or **no fertilizer** at all.
3. Natives are hardy in their local environment and are adapted to the local insect populations including pests. They support beneficial insect populations which is a natural pest control. **No pesticides** are needed.
4. Natives are **adapted to local weather** conditions, that have occurred in that region for a long time.
5. Natives are **rarely invasive**. Non-natives such as multiflora rose, autumn olive, Oriental bittersweet, and Japanese knotweed can spread rapidly.
6. Natives provide good **erosion control**. Their better adapted root systems help retain water and reduce runoffs.
7. Natives provide **natural habitat for wildlife** to raise their young by supporting the balance of the community food web. Large monocultured lawns are a habitat desert.
8. Natives **promote biodiversity**. By supporting the genetic diversity of pollinators and other wildlife with food and shelter, a foundation for healthy ecosystems is enhanced and maintained.
9. Natives will **save money**. They need less maintenance both chemical and manual to survive. And importantly, require less gas powered equipment which will help promote our own health and well-being.

The balance of an ecosystem is far reaching. Biodiversity is maintained from the tiniest insect to the large trees in an area. One of the most diverse trees is the oak, which provides both habitat and food and nesting sites for insects, birds, and wildlife. Other beneficial trees include black cherry, black walnut, and red maples.

Shrubs and small trees are the foundation of the border. When many perennials have gone underground, shrubs provide shelter to wildlife as well as interest year round. In our region in particular, we have many shrubs from which to select for attracting a variety birds and other creatures to the garden. In addition, these plants are beautiful in more than one season, with flowers, berries, and fall foliage color. Try witch hazel, mountain laurel, elderberry, sweet spire, hackberry, sourwood, shadbush, cranberry, spicebush, blueberry, rhododendron, and winterberry.

Many native perennials are host plants for our native pollinators. Monarch butterfly larvae survive only on milkweed. It lays its eggs on the leaves which provide food to the growing insect. Sunflowers (*Helianthus divaricatus*) are the host plant for Painted Lady butterflies. Dill and fennel are the host plant for Black Swallowtail butterflies. Coreopsis (*Coreopsis verticillata*) supports the Silvery Checkerspot butterfly, a species of concern in Connecticut.



Many native perennials support native pollinators with their nectar. Coral bells (*Heuchera*) come in many colors and shapes. Foam flower (*Tiarella*) and Knapweed (*Centaurea montana*) can make lovely additions to the garden. Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia subtomentosa*) works with goldenrod (*Solidago rigida*) and many Asters (*Symphotrichum*) to provide structure in the garden. Bees are attracted to Bee balm (*Monarda didyma*) and Moss phlox (*Phlox subulate*), which enhance the border. In wetter areas, try cardinal flowers (*lobelia cardinalis*).

There are grasses to blend into the bed as well. Little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) and switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*) can help fill in empty spaces.

In shadier areas , swamp azalea mix well with cardinal flower, foam flowers, liatris, and columbine to create a beautiful native plant bed.

These are only suggestions. There are many more native plants from which to choose to use in your garden. Let the tags guide you on information about bloom times, water, and light requirements.

Upcoming Events



Connecticut Science Center *MakeFest Make It Grow!*

WHERE: Connecticut Science Center, 250 Columbus Blvd., Hartford, CT

WHEN: Saturday, May 18, 2024, 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Rain or shine!

The Connecticut Science Center is excited to announce its third annual MakeFest event, in conjunction with their Family Gardening Day in Hartford. The event highlights the importance of growing healthy, smart, green and local through engaging on-site and virtual demonstrations, displays, activities and a large plant sale. The event is a planned partnership with the Connecticut Master Gardener Association. A portion of sales goes to the Connecticut Master Gardener Association.

If you wish to donate plants or volunteer at the plant sale please email Kim Kelly at: kkelly@ctmga.org



CMGA Nursery Day at McCue Gardens

Continuing in Popularity!

WHERE: McCue Nursery, 47 Hartford Ave., Wethersfield, CT

WHEN: Wednesday, June 12, 2024, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Rain or shine!

Since 1967, McCue Gardens has been growing an impressive selection of perennials and wildflowers. They are now a leading wholesale distributor of quality perennials and wildflowers in New England. Normally closed to the public, the gardens will be open to CMGA visitors on June 14. See: <https://www.facebook.com/mccuegardens/>

This will be an opportunity for all Master Gardeners, MG Interns, plus their friends and family to buy perennials, natives and woodland plants grown at this family nursery operated by Bruce and Cindy McCue. CMGA will receive 20% of the purchase price of *each plant* purchased on that day.



VIRTUAL PRESENTATION
Unraveling the Mysteries of Pruning:
Learn to Manage Trees & Shrubs for the Long Haul



WHEN: Tuesday, April 16, 2024 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM

George Trecina has been planning and planting gardens since the 1970s with his own property serving as his “experimental laboratory”. A graduate of The University of Connecticut and Cornell University, his main focus is on the improvement of residential properties. He established Land Design & Horticultural Sales LLC in 1992, a landscape design, installation and maintenance business. His other activities include lecturing and writing on landscape design and horticultural subjects, and he was a featured speaker at the most recent Connecticut Flower & Garden Show.

Registration required - [CLICK HERE](#) to register for this event.

Cost - FREE

Open to CMGA Members & Non-members

Sleepy Cat Farm
A Private Garden Tour



WHERE: Connecticut Science Center, 668 Lake Ave., Greenwich, CT

WHEN: Wednesday, May 1, 2024, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Rain date: Thursday, May 2, 2024, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

A treasure in the center of Greenwich, Sleepy Cat Farm is a private residence surrounded by 13 acres of gardens & landscapes. It's nothing short of magnificent. Join us for this extraordinary private tour at Sleepy Cat Farm in Greenwich. The hillsides and vistas change almost minute by minute, in this undulating landscape of surprises, intrigue and unexpected beauty.

Very limited parking (8 - 10 cars). Carpooling strongly recommended. Park by the Greenhouse. More details to come. Wear comfortable shoes. There are steps and stones to maneuver. Bathrooms and water stations are available.

Registration: \$20 per person. No refunds. Registration is currently full. Register to be placed on a waitlist at: <http://www.ctmga.org/events>.

Bellamy Ferriday House and Garden Tour

WHERE: 9 North Main St, Bethlehem, CT 06751

WHEN: Thursday, June 4, 2024 11 am

This tour offers an opportunity to see historic gardens. The Bellamy Ferriday house is a historic house museum that was built in 1754 and is on the National Register of Historic Places. Caroline Ferriday designed a formal parterre garden that features historic roses, peonies, lilacs and numerous fragrant trees and shrubs. She spent 78 summers on the property. A social justice and human rights champion, a fictionalized account of Caroline's life is the subject of the New York Times best selling book, *Lilac Girls* by Martha Law Kelly.

Very limited parking (20 cars). Carpooling strongly recommended.

[Registration opening soon](#). Registration required.





UConn Giving Day

WHEN: Wed, Apr 17, 2024 7:00 AM Thu, Apr 18, 2024 7:00 PM

Mark your calendars! UConn Gives and UConn Health Gives 2024 is coming April 17-18, 2024. Join UConn Nation as we come together for 36 hours to raise critical funds for various university programs and causes, strengthening UConn's impact and reach. UConn Gives harnesses the power of crowdfunding, connecting groups across all campuses and UConn Health with supporters worldwide through individual giving pages.

Your gift to the Master Gardener Fund supports the program by providing financial resources for equipment, supplies, educational programs for the public, classes for volunteers, conferences and so much more!

[Click Here](#) to access the Master Gardener Giving Page

Please Join or Renew Your Membership Today

Membership dues for 2024 remain at \$30.

Annual dues provide CMGA with its primary source of funding for the many Master Gardener-led community projects throughout the state as well as the support for the UConn Master Gardener program. We thank you for your prior support and hope you will continue by becoming a member for 2024.

Help us Go Green by using our simple online form that allows for Credit Card or PayPal payments. Click on the link below to use our secure online application. Thank you again for your continued support.

[**Renew Your Membership Here**](#)

Ballard Native Plant Garden

Educating the Community About Native Plants

CMGA



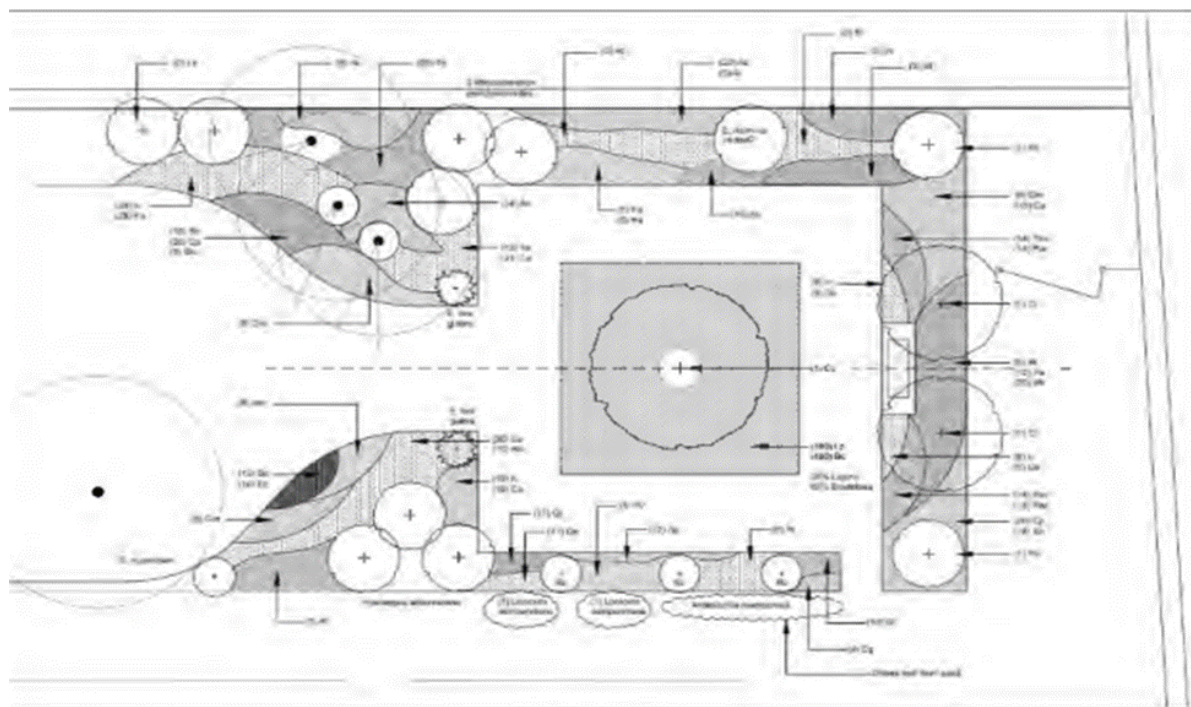
Grant Recipient

Brian Truskowski spearheaded the Ballard Park Native Plant Garden project. The overall goal is to expose, educate and encourage the community to learn about the benefits of planting native species.

Brian enlisted the help of volunteers, many from the Ridgefield Garden Club, who engaged to help with the effort. Volunteers removed sod, prepared the soil, planted and transplanted many plants, and watered / weeded throughout the summer and fall. Volunteers, including Brian, made many trips to local plant sources to pick up native plants as they became available. Having a well thought out design to work from also helped make planning and field work more seamless.

The only factor that impeded progress was the lack of availability of some of the desired native plants. The volunteers worked with the plant stock that was available throughout the growing season and added plants as they became available. In 2024, the focus will be on filling out the rest of the design with additional plants, as they become available from local providers. A number of participants are also growing some native plants from seed to help supplement the quantities and types of native plants needed.

CMGA grant money helped in the purchase of plants and labels for all the native plantings in the garden. The project also provides a means for the community to easily link to more detailed information about the plants and/or seek expert advice.



Ballard Native Garden
With Brian and
friends



A Native Plant Project

By Alicia Cornelio
Editor, Laurel

I have found myself in the situation of moving to a new home. I felt no twinge of regret seeing the invasive multifoliolate roses ripped away that dominated the lot. Now I want to make up for this clearing by adding plants that will truly benefit the displaced wildlife. I have spent the winter researching native alternatives to popular shrubs and trees that dominate homes in Connecticut.

Most of the plants that made my list are native to the Northeast, but I expanded to include a few that are native to North America. There are many European and Asian plants that are absolutely beautiful and some have naturalized in North America, but I excluded them. Some of my choices are dwarf cultivars of native species to fit in as foundation plantings. As long as the main characteristics are present such as flowers, berries, and nuts to benefit wildlife, they made my list. Even if you are not landscaping an entire yard, think about native plants to replace a dead tree or shrub. Consider a small redesign of a problem area in your yard using native plants.

Vine Maple instead of Japanese Maple

I absolutely love Japanese maples and was determined to find something similar. Vine maple (*Acer circinatum*) is native to the Northwest. When planted in a semi-shaded location, it can weep and sprawl like Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*). Even in sun, it can be espaliered. If left alone, it can grow 15 feet upright and makes a good tree to plant near a house. It is deer resistant and has bright fall foliage. Spring flowers provide nectar to adult butterflies, bees and other insects. Fall seeds provide food for birds and small mammals, while the overall plant provides nesting sites and cover for birds and small mammals.



Eastern Redbud instead of Cherry Plum

Cherry Plum (*Prunus cerasifera*) was a standard planting 30 years ago. It has pretty pink flowers in early spring. Red bud (*Cercis canadensis*), achieves the same look with pink flowers in early spring and heart shaped leaves. There are cultivars with red leaves. It grows to 25 feet on average and can be planted near a house. It likes full sun to partial shade. Native bees visit these flowers in spring. Redbuds are also host plants for the larvae of several butterflies and moths.



Viburnum Arrowwood or Hobblebush instead of Double file

Double file Viburnum (*Viburnum plicatum*), native to Asia, are beautiful. However, opt for native (*Viburnum dentatum*), also known as arrowwood viburnum. They have large flat white flowers that attract bees, flies, and butterflies. The blue berries are loved by birds. It grows to an average of 10 feet, makes a good hedge, and is tolerant of harsh conditions.

Hobblebush (*Viburnum lantanoides*) does well in shade. Spring Azure butterfly caterpillars eat Hobblebush leaves, and many birds eat the berries.



Inkberry Holly instead of Boxwood

We all love the easily trimmed boxwood for hedges, pots, and foundation plants. Unfortunately, even the named American boxwood is native to Europe. A perfect alternative is Inkberry Holly (*Ilex glabra*) with evergreen, shiny, small leaves so similar to boxwood. However, inkberry leaves don't suffer from the diseases of boxwoods. Its dense growth habit is perfect for hedges. It grows on average 10 feet tall but there are dwarf cultivars. The nectar from its tiny spring flowers attracts bees, butterflies, and other native pollinators. It is also the larval host to Henry's Elfin Butterfly.



Mountain Andromeda instead of Japanese Andromeda

Japanese andromeda is everywhere. Hated by deer with pretty drooping flowers in early spring, it is a staple of Connecticut yards. But instead, try Mountain Andromeda (*Pieris floribunda*), native to the Eastern United States. Its white flowers are upright, has dense foliage and grows to about six feet tall. It is deer resistant, tolerates wet soil and part shade. Blooming in early spring, it is an early source of food for bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds.



Eastern White Pine instead of Austrian or Japanese White Pine

Eastern White Pine (*Pinus strobus*) are huge trees. Homeowners mistakenly used them as a fast growing hedge without the yearly trimming and they grew out of control. Austrian and Japanese pines were chosen as an alternative with slower growth and smaller size. But now, there is an eastern white pine developed at UCONN by the late Dr. Waxman called Connecticut Slate. It is a dwarf that only grows six by eight feet. It is dense and spreading that makes it an ideal foundation plant. Songbirds and small mammals eat eastern white pine seeds.



Shrubby Cinquefoil instead of Japanese Spirea

Japanese Spirea is a popular choice for a short shrub in a variety of leaf and flower colors that is easy to grow. It can be seen in business and home landscapes everywhere. There is one native variety called meadowsweet but it doesn't have the same shape or flowers. An excellent alternative is Shrubby cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticosa*). It is a long blooming rounded small shrub for the front of a sunny border that comes in many colors. It is cold and drought tolerant and relatively pest free. Most of all, it is resistant to deer and rabbits! It is the host plant for specialist bees and many butterflies.



Rhododendron Catawba instead of Asian Rhododendron

There are thousands of varieties of rhododendron growing all over the world, especially in Asia. So if you want a native rhododendron, choose Catawba or Rosebay. Even the popular P.J.M. developed in Massachusetts is a hybrid of Asian rhododendron *dauricum*. Native rhododendron are understory plants that do well in shade, growing six to ten feet tall. They have large evergreen leaves and flowers in pink or white. Deer and rabbits stay away because the plant is poisonous. The flowers of native rhododendron will attract butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds.



Next issue, my new meadow project!!

Connect with Us

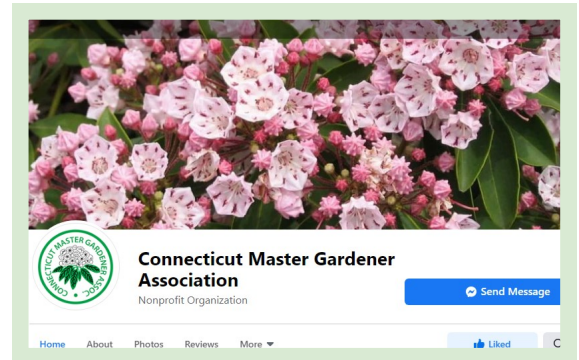
Take CMGA with you, any time, any place!

By Vicky Ambrosey and Lisa Doggart

CMGA can now easily fit into your busy schedules via our social media outlets: Facebook, Instagram and our website blog. You can view the latest news and information about CMGA happenings on all mobile and desktop devices.

Facebook since 2010 - [Follow CMGA & Like Our Page](#)

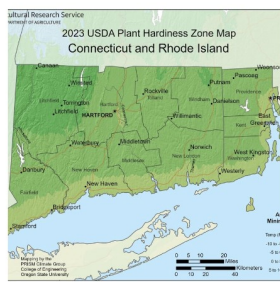
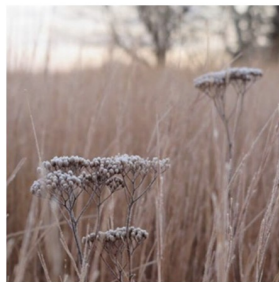
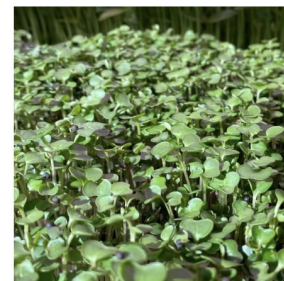
We celebrate 14 years with Facebook, since Earth Day, April 22, 2010. Our intent with Facebook is to share our CMGA activities and events, along with other state and local activities that might be of interest to our members and our UConn Master Gardeners. Like our page and look forward to timely updates and information about our state.



Instagram since 2021 - [Follow us at @ctmastergardener](#)

With Instagram, we enjoy sharing our stories and pictures of our outreach projects, activities and events. If a picture is worth a thousand words; gardening pictures are worth a million words! **#ctmastergardener**

You can follow us on Instagram [@ctmastergardener](#), or click on the following images to view our recent posts.



Website since 2005, updated 2024 - ctmga.org

Our recently renovated website is our official place to visit CMGA online. It has the most complete information and access to Membership, Grants, and Events, *For our UConn Master Gardeners and Interns, it's a great place to read and learn what CMGA is all about!*

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You are receiving this email because you opted in for communications when you became a member of the CMGA organization.

Mailchimp is our new tool for email communications to our membership. CMGA uses only official organizational emails to communicate with our members- **@ctmga.org** - *Please consider adding these emails to your safe list so they will not be considered as spam. We don't want you to miss out on your CMGA News!*

