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Has your property been certified for 5 or more years? If so, We’d love to see current pictures of your garden! We’d also like to hear your stories about pollinator gardening. What have you learned and what is your greatest success? Email us at papollinator@psu.edu. We will share your stories in future issues of “What’s the Buzz”.

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**Outstanding Pollinator Gardens**

*By Linda and Rich Silverman, Penn State Master Gardeners*

Welcome to the 14th Garden of Merit Award. This edition features The Appalachian Trail Museum Native Plant Garden. We did this interview in the summer of 2021 with Lorrie Preston who was then in charge of the garden.

As of today, Ann Bodling, a professional garden consultant and a very experienced native plant person, is taking care of the Appalachian Trail Museum Native Plant Garden.

*(Outstanding Pollinator Garden, continued on page 2)*
Appalachian Trail Museum Native Plants Garden
Pine Grove Furnace State Park
1120 Pine Grove Road, Gardners,
PA 17324

Please describe the garden

The native plant gardens greet our visitors as they approach the historic old Grist Mill building in which our museum is located. Our building was built in the 1830’s, a working mill that supported the community built around the Pine Grove Iron Works. The building has since served as a residence and a state park museum. It sat vacant for several years until the A.T. Museum opened there in June 2010. The museum sits very close to the halfway point of the 2,190 mile Appalachian Trail between Georgia and Maine. It’s located in Pine Grove Furnace State Park within the Michaux State Forest. Shortly after the museum opened, the native plant garden along the entrance sidewalk was planted by Penn State Master Gardener Georgia Freet, of York County. It provided a cheerful welcome to our visitors, as well as to many pollinators and butterflies.

How old is the garden and how long has it been on this site?

In 2016 or so, an extensive ramp was built in the front of the museum, along Rt. 233, to provide ADA-required access to the upper level of the museum so we could expand. Native trees and shrubs were placed inside and outside the ramp to create the continued “feel” of the Appalachian Trail. With the bones in place, in the fall of 2018 we applied cardboard and bark mulch to suffocate the grass and weeds that had taken over the area.

In the spring of 2019, we extended the native plant gardens at our entrance to include the interior and exterior of our large ramp. This year the main entrance to the museum was moved to the upper level, so our garden is in a very prominent spot – readily seen by all visitors while they navigate our ramp. The garden can be enjoyed from the ground level, but also can be observed from up above – a bird’s eye view.

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My hope is that people see the life within the garden and get inspired to create their own pollinator garden at home or within their community. I am also trying to draw attention to the fact that native plants found in each of the 14 states along the trail corridor provide essential wildlife and pollinator habitat in the heavily populated eastern U.S. Native plants now cover about 2,500 sq. ft. of the museum grounds. The garden has a mix of sun and shade, with much of the garden in the full, hot afternoon sun.

Because this building was in the center of the iron-making community, the soil is full of pieces of “slag” – colorful glass-like “rocks” – a by-product left behind when the iron was separated from other minerals and impurities. These do not seem to affect many of the plants negatively, but it has required lots of “picking” rocks. I have enjoyed the reemergence of some native plants that must have been grown in the gardens surrounding the building in decades past – at least two different types of ferns have come back, as well as Jack-in-the-pulpit, violets, and more.

**How many species of plants does the garden have?**

We have several dozen different species of plants included in the garden, with large clumps of most of the species. I have my favorites that I consider essential in any wildlife garden – purple coneflower, Joe-Pye weed, milkweed, goldenrod, short-toothed mountain mint, black-eyed Susan, bee balm, *Coreopsis*, asters, *Agastache*, along with many others.

**What kind of pollinators does the garden attract? What have you done to increase pollinator diversity at the museum?**

We attract an enormous variety of pollinators at the museum gardens – more species than I can identify. Ruby-throated hummingbirds are regular visitors to the wild columbine and bee balm. Monarch butterflies nectar and reproduce on the common milkweed and butterfly weed and there are several swallowtail butterfly species that visit the gardens. I am hoping for the arrival of the pipevine swallowtail on the pipevine that has finally taken off this year. Many different skippers – especially silver-spotted skippers, can be observed at almost every visit. I watched a variegated fritillary butterfly lay an egg on common violets and a week or so later, I located the growing caterpillar. There are bumblebees, honeybees, sweat bees, and wasps of many different sizes, shapes, colors and patterns. There are pollinating flies of different types, too.

(Continued on page 4)
Milkweed bugs and beetles also make their home in the garden. The garden is alive with pollinators and winged beauties. Movement in the garden never stops. I included a variety of flower shapes, colors, and sizes to increase pollinator diversity. We also have something blooming in every season – early spring to late fall. Including host plants also attracts additional pollinators to the garden.

**How did you get into gardening? How did you get into natives?**

I grew up in rural central New York State, next door to my grandfather’s farm. My siblings and I had the freedom to romp in the wilderness over many acres and explore nature. The outdoors was, and still is, my happy place. Gardening is a suburban form of farming, and gardening for nature brings the beauty of the natural world directly to me, where I can enjoy it daily and continue to learn about all of the miracles that take place in nature. I feel very fortunate to have been taught and inspired by some very passionate wildlife gardeners on the benefits of native plants - Connie Schmotzer of Penn State Extension – York County; renowned author and speaker, Dr. Douglas Tallamy; Jan Getgood, owner of the former Meadowood Native Plants Nursery; Wild Ones: Native Plants, Native Landscapes organization, and others.

**What are your future plans to increase pollinators in the garden?**

As the garden continues to mature, I will maintain the most pollinator valuable plants and replace a few plants that are not thriving to their full potential. I hope to add more to the column about the garden called “The Latest Buzz from the Gardens of the A.T. Museum.” Past issues can be found on the A.T. Museum website at [www.atmuseum.org](http://www.atmuseum.org).

**What have you observed this year in regard to the number of bees and other pollinators?**

Each year the garden fills in and seems to have more pollinators than ever. There is always a period in late July and August where the garden is alive with many butterflies of various sizes and colors. Museum visitors can’t miss their presence and stop to take notice and admire. They exclaim that they have never seen so many different butterflies in one place in the natural world. It’s very rewarding to see their excitement.
There are many native plants that attract pollinators. Do you have a special one that you would like to suggest?

_Pycnanthemum muticum_—short-toothed mountain mint

Short-toothed mountain mint, _Pycnanthemum muticum_, is one of my favorites and was observed to attract the most insect diversity in Penn State native plant trials. It certainly is not the showiest plant in the garden, but once the tiny pinkish flowers open on the silvery heads, pollinators of every size and description can be found on it from morning until evening for 2–3 months, almost tripping over each other during their frenzied visit. I love to stop whatever I am doing and just take a few minutes to observe closely and enjoy the rewards of all my work in the garden.

Many thanks to Lorrie for sharing this wonderful garden with us! If you are in the Pine Grove Furnace area, please stop by and visit the museum gardens. And join us for the spring 2023 edition of “What’s the Buzz” for a look at Lorrie’s home garden.

**MOVING?**

If you have a certified Pollinator friendly garden and are moving, please take your sign with you and send a note to PAPollinatorCert@psu.edu to let us know you have moved. The new owner of your property will need to recertify. When the gardens at your new address are ready, send us a new application and mention that you that you have moved. We can certify your new garden and waive the application fee.
**OUTSTANDING POLLINATOR PLANTS**

*Cornus sericea* – red twig dogwood

*By Master Gardener Lorri Schmick*

*Cornus sericea*, the red-osier dogwood (frequently referred to as the Red twig dogwood), is a species of flowering plant in the family of Cornaceae, native to North America. When you think of Dogwoods, you may picture small trees with showy white flowers. Red-osier dogwoods are relatives of these flowering trees, but are shrubby, deciduous plants.

One of the most popular plants for use in holiday decorations, the red-osier dogwood can be enjoyed year-round in the garden. The shrub produces creamy white flowers in the spring attracting pollinators such as insects and butterflies, and also birds and small mammals. Then it produces berries that ripen from green to white attracting many different bird species that feed on them in the fall. The leaves turn bright yellow to purplish-red in the fall. But it is the stems that are so popular. The stems start out green in the spring and summer, then turn bright red as the foliage drops off in autumn. The colder the temperature gets; the brighter the red color intensifies on the stems.

The red-osier dogwood is a fast-growing shrub which spreads freely. Plant it either as a single specimen or in groups. It makes a low maintenance, flowering hedge along walkways or property boundaries. Planting in groups is also useful for erosion control for banks or hilly areas or river banks. This hardy shrub is best suited for zones 3-8.

The shrub prefers full sun for the best color, but can tolerate light shade. The shrub also thrives in organic rich soil, medium to wet soil and it can even tolerate swampy or boggy conditions.

The red-osier dogwood grows to a height of 7-9 feet and a spread of around 10’ at maturity. There are a number of cultivars, including the smaller compact ‘Artic Fire’ and ‘Kelseyi dwarf’ suited for a Zen or contemporary garden.

Red-osier dogwood care is minimal. In late winter, prune older branches for maximum color. Prune out one-third of the older branches at ground level every couple of years to promote new growth, which produces the best color. If the shrub becomes overgrown, cut all branches back to nine inches above the ground. Red-osier dogwood propagates itself by stems or stolons that grow just under the ground. You can make new plants by placing cuttings in potting soil indoors, then transplant outside in the spring.
PROTECTING POLLINATORS:
Avoiding Invasives

_Pyrus calleryana - callery (Bradford) pear_

_Editor’s note: Callery pear was included in last year’s newsletter as an invasive plant. In November, 2021, it was added to the Pennsylvania noxious weed list. As such, callery pears may no longer be distributed, cultivated or propagated in Pennsylvania. So we are running the article again. For more information, visit the PDA website at https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Plants_Land_Water/PlantIndustry/NIPPP/Pages/Callery-Pear.aspx_

Spring in Pennsylvania often brings a flush of white blossoms along roadsides, in parking lots and in byways. While some may admire this deluge of white, gardeners in the know realize that this is an invasive plant showing off its dominance. These are _Pyrus calleryana_, better known as callery or Bradford pears.

Callery pears are native to China and were known as tough trees with large thorns that would grow in tough sites. They were introduced to Maryland in 1918 as a rootstock for edible pears that were suffering from fireblight. A horticulturist noticed a non-thorny seedling that he then selected and named ‘Bradford’. Bradfords were thought to be sterile by themselves. But as new varieties were developed to correct the poor branching structure of the original bradford, any two of these varieties could produce a heavy fruit set to be spread by birds.

And spread they did. The tremendous popularity of this tree in the last half of the 20th century meant that parking lots, malls, new developments, city streets were heavily planted with callery pears. No longer sterile, callery pears quickly spread into fields and hedgerows where they compete with native trees and shrubs. We are seeing a steady march of callery pears northward. As our climate warms this progression is accelerating. For more information please see the Pennsylvania DCNR fact sheet.

It’s fairly easy to pull or dig small seedlings. Larger trees can be removed by cutting and then immediately applying triclopyr or glyphosate to the trunk. But most of all — don’t purchase or plant callery pears!

[Image: Callery pears planted in parking lot, York Co]

[Image: View from Manheim Twp library (Lancaster Co) of field of escaped callery pears.]
Identify Night Singing Insects with New Field Guide

Heather Desorcie, Center for Pollinator Research
at Penn State University

If you stand outside after dark on a warm summer or fall evening, you will likely hear a chorus of night singing insects. They can be difficult to identify by sight, as they camouflage silently in vegetation during the day and are masked by darkness at night. Learning the nighttime calls of crickets, coneheads, and katydids is the best way you can identify insects in the order Orthoptera.

A new pocket field guide developed by undergraduate student Celia Graef provides users with several key pieces of information to aide in night singing insect identification. The creation of Pocket Field Guide to Night Singing Insects of Pennsylvania was funded by the Insect Biodiversity Center, the Huck Institutes of the Life Sciences, and the Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences. Insect illustrations are by Darin J. McNeil. Additional support for the project came from Dr. Christina Grozinger, Dr. Harland Patch, Heather Desorcie, and Dr. Natalie Boyle.

Each page of the pocket field guide highlights a species of Orthoptera with an illustration of the species, the time of year that it is likely to be heard, and a sonogram and mnemonic of its call. By scanning the QR code on the back of the guide, users can gather more detailed information on each species and listen to recorded calls.

To access the free digital portion of the pocket field guide, visit https://psu.pb.unizin.org/nightsinginginsects. To request a physical copy of the Pocket Field Guide to Night Singing Insects of Pennsylvania for a $5 donation, please contact Heather Desorcie at hud192@psu.edu.