



Pennsylvania
PENNSYLVANIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Notes

October 2011

PNPS Annual Meeting

Schedule

PNPS Annual Meeting
Saturday, November 12

*** 10:30 AM to 12:00 PM**

Plant Walk with Eric Burkhart

*** 12:00 AM to 12:30 AM**

Registration and Socializing

Drinks will be provided. Feel free to bring a brown bag lunch. If you would like to bring a snack to share that would welcomed.

*** 12:30 PM to 1:15 PM**

Speaker - Emily Pudliner

National Forest Service Intern

Summer Education Program at
Johnstown Flood National Memorial

*** 1:15 PM to 1:45 PM**

PNPS Business Meeting

***1:45 PM to 2:45 PM**

Speakers - Pam and Doug Ford

State College

Building Biodiversity in the Garden

The board of PNPS hopes that you will be able to attend our Annual Meeting. Besides an excellent opportunity to explore Shaver's Creek with Eric Burkhart we have two great speakers lined up to stimulate thought and conversation about promoting Native Plants in Pennsylvania. In addition we need member feedback about the direction and purpose of our organization. Please attend.

About the Speakers

Emily Pudliner, intern with the National Park Service, will speak about her after-school program and summer program with students from the Greater Johnstown High School, with the ultimate goal of educating participants on various aspects of environmental issues - most specifically sustainable resource management and natural biodiversity preservation. The summer program will include the construction of two native plant gardens - tentatively located at the Johnstown Flood National Memorial and the Greater Johnstown High School.

Pam and Doug Ford will present "Building Biodiversity in the Garden, one Backyard at a Time".

Whether your concern is dwindling native species or a decrease in pollinators, most of us recognize loss of wildlife habitats as a growing environmental concern. Pam and Doug Ford present their own landscape strategy for providing a diversity of native vegetation that serves as food and habitat to attract and support a variety of local wildlife. The model they will present is their own property along Slab Cabin Run.



*Ford family
backyard landscape
connecting to Slab
Cabin Run.*

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of the
Pennsylvania Native Plant Society
PO Box 807, Boalsburg, PA 16827
www.pawiildflower.org

Officers - Current

President: Debra Grim

Vice-president: Bob Gruver

Treasurer: Jean Najjar

Recording Secretary: Sarah Chamberlain

Corresponding Secretary: Diane Albright

Director at Large: Falene Hamilton

Articles, art work, photos, comments and suggestions should be sent to Jean Najjar at Jnaggar29@gmail.com.

Pennsylvania Native Plant Society

Tune in, to what's happening everyday:

Check out our new and improved Website at

WWW.pawiildflower.org

And look for us on Facebook!

Meadow grasses are lawn alternatives

BY DAVE KORBONITS | AS PUBLISHED IN THE NEWS JOURNAL SEPTEMBER, 2010

Meadow gardening has become more popular than ever and is a great replacement to the traditional lawn. Biologists caution that the typical lawn is a biological desert. This manicured monoculture is an oversimplified community that provides neither food nor shelter for animals. A meadow, grassland interspersed with a wide variety of native wildflowers, is full of life.

Meadow Benefits

A meadow garden has many benefits over a large lawn besides the obvious beauty of gorgeous blossoms and feathery grasses. A variety of birds, butterflies and insects interact with plants to provide hours of exploration and entertainment. A bluebird leaves a tree branch to catch an insect. A goldfinch perches atop a purple coneflower to eat the seeds. Before the seeds were formed, butterflies and other insects visited the same flower to sip nectar and gather pollen. To quote entomologist, Dr. Doug Tallamy, "A plant that has fed nothing has not done its job." By planting a meadow we re-establish a food web and encourage wildlife. Such a richness of species increases biodiversity and makes our backyards healthier ecosystems. Planting a meadow also encourages beneficial insects that will keep your garden pests in balance. Many native bees like to nest in the bare ground provided in a meadow.

From a maintenance and environmental standpoint, meadows have substantial paybacks compared to traditional lawns. A meadow only needs to be mowed once a year, needs no fertilizer, requires minimal herbicide, and rarely needs watering. Much of the biomass of a grass plant is stored below ground in the root system so it is very adaptable and drought tolerant. Your frequently mowed front lawn most likely has the porosity of "green concrete." Because a meadow only gets mowed once a year, the compaction caused by regular mowing doesn't occur. Therefore there is much less runoff compared to a traditional lawn, and the slowed rainfall can recharge the aquifers.

A meadow garden is not maintenance free however and requires regular scouting for invasive weeds, removal of woody plants and a yearly cut-back or burn. An average meadow, with good soil found in the mid-Atlantic region, would eventually undergo forest succession and become woodland, if left to its own devices over the years.

Besides being ecologically friendly, meadow grasses are really quite stunning. Have you ever ridden down a country road, looked up on the roadside bank and seen the handsome reddish-tan clumps of our native warm

season grass, brooms edge? Glorious! This is one of the many native meadow grasses that make a charming backdrop for our native wildflowers through the summer and fall. Native grasses gently swaying in the breeze create a peaceful sensation you will find nowhere else. In late fall and winter, they take center stage with their lovely color.

Our Favorite Meadow Grasses

Some of our best native grasses are warm season grasses that thrive in the summer heat and are extremely drought tolerant. Here are a few of our best warm and cool season native grasses for a meadow planting or a perennial garden.

Tufted hair grass (*Deschampsia caespitosa*) is a cool season native that greens up much earlier in spring than the warm season grasses. It begins to grow about the same time that typical lawns do. This plant forms striking spheres of deep green narrow foliage. By August they are topped with abundant golden plumed seed heads. This grass is a great transition plant for the meadow edge and partly shaded garden areas.

Warm season grasses grow more aggressively during the warmer summer months. Broom sedge (*Andropogon virginicus*) is a common grass often seen growing in russet clumps. This clumping quality (in contrast to a sod-forming grass) is important since it provides cover from predators for wildlife while they hunt for food, while also offering spaces for those beautiful wildflowers. The flowers on this grass are tall with silky tufts. It will tolerate a little bit of shade.



Schizachyrium scoparium

Little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) like broom sedge grows about 3' to 5' and also turns that beautiful auburn color when colder weather works its magic. Little bluestem has very fine textured upright clumps that vary from green to a strong blue-green. It is particularly picturesque when the delicate flowers are backlit by the autumn sky. This premiere meadow grass prefers to grow in well-drained soil, but tolerates clay. It is host to many species of butterflies and the seeds are eaten by birds.

Yellow Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) draws many favorable comments in fall when the golden wand-like flowers catch people's eyes. It is not for every meadow because it can grow to 6' tall and can compete rather aggressively with other meadow plants.

Big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*) also grows to 6' tall but is clump forming. Native to the tall grass prairie, it can have an attractive bluish cast to the foliage and forms a nice tall column of grass. The three part flowers of big bluestem are reminiscent of a turkey's foot, another common name it claims. These tall grasses can be used as a background, screen or as a centerpiece to a meadow planting.

Elegant and refined, prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*) not only has a use in meadows but also serves as a specimen plant. Its soft-textured mounds are most effective arranged in large masses. In autumn, the bunch forming leaves turn apricot, tan, or yellow. It is known for its low maintenance, drought and heat tolerance.

Despite the strange name, hair awn muhly (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) is probably the most ornamental of our native grasses. This clumping, warm season grass forms a 3' round wiry globe. From September to October the whole plant is gradually covered in a cotton candy mist of blooms.



Sorghastrum nutans

So increase your ecological sustainability, embrace the culture of conservation in your garden and use meadow grasses as a lawn alternative. Start small by converting a small part of your lawn to meadow, add your favorite native sun-loving perennials and begin to enjoy the bird and butterfly filled world of meadow gardening.

Newsletter Update: Only a few members have responded to our announcement about discontinuing the newsletter, so, for financial reasons, we have decided to mail the newsletter electronically to as many members as possible. If we have your correct email address, you have received this issue electronically; if not, we sent it by US mail. **If you have email, please contact us at correspondence@pawildflower.org to ensure we have your correct address.** If you do not have email, please contact us if you want to receive future issues by US mail. If we do not hear from you, you may not receive any further newsletters.

Upcoming Events:

Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council's Turning a New Leaf Conference

Friday, December 2, 2011 , 8 AM to 6 PM

DoubleTree Resort by Hilton, Lancaster, Pennsylvania Educational Sessions

Networking Opportunities, Eco-Marketplace

Stay current with sustainable landscaping practices

Early registration fee \$99 , \$119 after October 15

Member and Student discounts available

CEU credits available

Ballot:

PNPS Member Ballot

Election 2011

Vice President

- *Bob Gruver (incumbent)*
- _____ *(write-in)*

Corresponding Secretary

- *Betsy Whitman*
- _____ *(write-in)*

Treasurer

- *Jean Najjar (incumbent)*
- _____ *(write-in)*

Board Elections and Expansion

There are three positions that require filling at this time.

In addition, the Board would like to welcome Pam Ford as a Director at Large. We are thrilled to have Pam and would welcome other members to consider volunteering in this capacity as “many hands make little work” and we can always use more hands. A Director at Large attends monthly Board Meetings and may volunteer to help lead initiatives or projects or support the Board in other ways.

Your vote is important. If you are not planning to attend the Annual Meeting this year, please submit your ballot by Monday, October 31, 2011. You can mail your vote to: PNPS, PO Box 807, Boalsburg, PA 16827, or email your vote to Diane Albright at correspondence@pawildflower.org. Refer to the By-Laws on www.pawildflower.org for all election procedures.