

FIELD NOTES

The latest native plant news and notes from the Wildflower Center

NATIVE TO NEW YORK

The Wildflower Center's first affiliate garden makes New York history

LAST SUMMER, DRIVERS ALONG portions of the Taconic Parkway in northern Westchester County, New York, were greeted with a kaleidoscope of color. More than four acres of native yellow coreopsis, pale-pink coneflowers, deep-purple asters and pale-lavender monardas graced roadsides to the delight of residents and tourists alike. The outcome of Project Wildflower, this display of native beauty is the result of New York Assemblywoman Sandy Galef's vision and years of hard work by the Native Plant Center and other local organizations. It is also just one step toward accomplishing a major goal of The Native Plant Center: to get wildflowers along New York state's roadsides. It is also an example of why The Native Plant Center is now known as one of the most effective organizations for educating the public about and promoting the use of native plants in New York.

In 1998, The Native Plant Center became the first affiliate of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. Located at Westchester Community College in Valhalla, New York, it is the brainchild of Betsy Stern, former Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center board member. "The Native Plant Center has succeeded far beyond all our expectations," said Stern. "I still find it hard to believe that in just five short years we are where we are today."



In just five years, The Native Plant Center has put native plants on the map in the busy suburban area, Westchester County, New York.

Where they are now is impressive. Accomplishments include the creation of two demonstration gardens showcasing 75 species of native trees, shrubs, flowers, and grasses; sponsoring four major symposia, including one on "Managing Roadsides Naturally;" offering numerous lecture series and hands-on workshops; and holding a number of successful fundraisers, including four native-plant sales and two Art and Photography Show Galas.

Probably the most important success so far, however, is the ability of the center's director, Brooke Beebe, to forge relationships with county and local officials as well as other area nonprofits to promote the use of native plants. It was such a collaboration that led County Executive Andrew J. Spano to remark: "The Native Plant Center has been instrumental in assisting us to develop innovative ways to maintain our properties in an envi-

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❖ FROM THE FIELD ❖

WILD FOR SPRING

An Artisans Festival kicks off the Wildflower Days™ season on March 20 and 21, 2004. From fine art to folk art, the best in natural forms will be on display. Over 20 artists and artisans will showcase and sell their nature-related work including metal work, painting, photography, pottery, and more. Event highlights include a book signing, carving demonstration, children's interactive mural painting activity, educational discovery stations, walks and talks, and entertainment provided by various local musicians. The Artisans Festival is just the prelude to a spring full of fabulous events and workshops at the Wildflower Center.



Gordon McGregor

GET YOUR WAGON

The ever-popular Spring Plant Sale and Gardening Festival will be held on April 17 and 18, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., with a special members-only preview sale Friday, April 16, from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. This plant sale boasts the largest selection of native plants in Central Texas with

ronmentally friendly way" and to issue a landmark order requiring all landscaping on county-owned property to use plants native to Westchester. This 2001 order also bans the use of any of the top 20 invasive plants listed by the Invasive Plant Council of New York State.

The Parks Department already has started planting native shrubs, flowers, and grasses in several parks where invasives had crowded out existing natives. At Read Sanctuary in Rye, New York, Japanese knotweed and porcelain berry were removed and replaced with black-eyed Susans and little bluestem, and at the Nature Study Woods in New Rochelle, red and silver maples, sycamores, and swamp white oaks were planted in place of Norway maples. The County's order also extends to its five golf courses. In 2002 alone, through its "Golf Goes Native" program, the County planted 2,500 drought-resistant native trees, shrubs, flowers, grasses, and ferns at its Maple Moor Golf Course



in White Plains.

Additionally, a brochure on the recommended Westchester County native plants for homeowners and landscapers was developed with significant input from The Native Plant Center. According to Jack Robbins, Westchester's deputy parks commissioner, this brochure is in such demand it is now in its second printing.

So, what's in store for the future for this first national affiliate? "We look forward to strengthening our ties with Westchester County and New York-state institutions to get our message out to even more people, and to work more closely with the Wildflower Center in Austin," said Patricia Keesee, co-chair of the center's steering committee and board member of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. "The more collaborative projects we can do to promote the mission of the Wildflower Center, the better!"
— Text/photos by Cece Fabbro ❁

SPRINGTIME

at The Native Plant Center at Westchester Community College:

2004 WILDFLOWER SYMPOSIUM: NATIVE PLANTS ARE FOR THE BIRDS

March 20 Co-sponsored with five local chapters of the National Audubon Society. Focus is on the importance of creating connecting backyard habitats for birds, wildlife and people.

Keynote speaker: Tess Present, National Audubon Society

SPRING 2004 SERIES OF LECTURE/HANDS-ON WORKSHOPS

Feb. 14, 10 a.m.-noon Sow and Grow Natives: A Hands-on Sowing and Transplanting Workshop with Anne Megaro, Wildcliff Greenhouse.

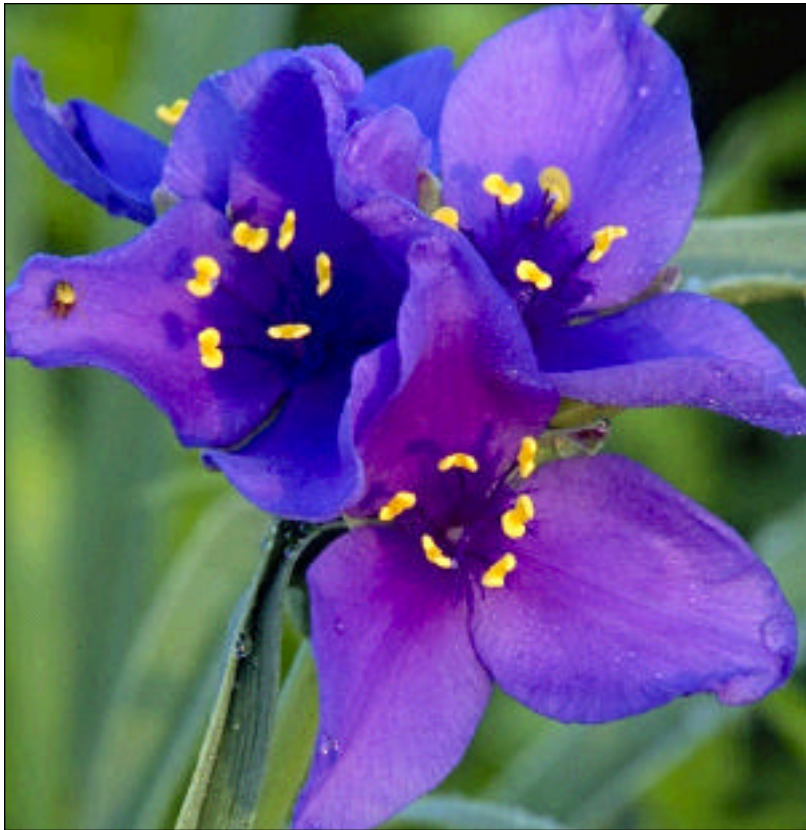
March 27, 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m. The Wildflowers of Westchester with Beth Herr, Curator, Ward Pound Ridge Reservation.

June 5, 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Streamside Restoration with Native Plants with Rob Doscher and Diane Miller, both with the Westchester County Department of Planning.

FIFTH ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT SALE

May 1, 2004

Call The Native Plant Center's office at (914)785-7870 or visit their Web site at www.nativeplantcenter.org for more information.



VIRGINIA SPIDERWORT

Spotlight on a native plant in season

FAMILY Commelinaceae

SPECIES *Tradescantia virginiana*

TAXONOMIC DETAILS *Tradescantia* is an American genus comprising 70 species, with a number being cultivated as ornamentals, including the non-native inch plant (*Tradescantia zebrina*). A few are endemic to individual states, such as *T. edwardsiana*, *T. brevifolia*, and related annual *Tinantia anomala* (Texas) and perennial *Callisia cordifolia* (Florida). The common name, spiderwort, may be derived from a spider web substance brought about by mucilaginous sap that hardens and becomes threadlike when released from a broken stem. The genera is named for John Tradescant (1608-1662), gardener to King Charles I of England.

FLOWER Virginia spiderwort puts forth blue to purple flowers atop stems in terminal clusters, blooming from late April to August. The petals are present in pairs of three, exhibiting six stamens with yellow anthers that prominently stand out against the reddish hues of the petals. Even though the flowers close by mid-afternoon and last for only one day, successive growth extends the species period of bloom.

DESCRIPTION *T. virginiana* is an erect, herbaceous perennial growing in clumps, with fleshy, mucilaginous stems that reach 12 to 18 inches in height. Its linear, iris-like leaves are 6 to 12 inches long and narrow (1/4 to 1/2 inch wide), folded lengthwise and upturned to form a "V" shape. Sepals and pedicels are conspicu-

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some 300 species and 23,000 plants from which to choose. Native plant experts are available all day to help you make the best choice for your garden.

NATURE BROUGHT TO LIFE

Wildflower Days™ wraps up on May 1 and 2 with The Living Garden. Visitors will watch nature come to life when The Living Garden visits the Wildflower Center. DiVine, The Rock, The Fountain, and The Orchid make their first appearance at a Texas garden during this can't-miss event. The Living Garden will be open on May 1, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on May 2, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

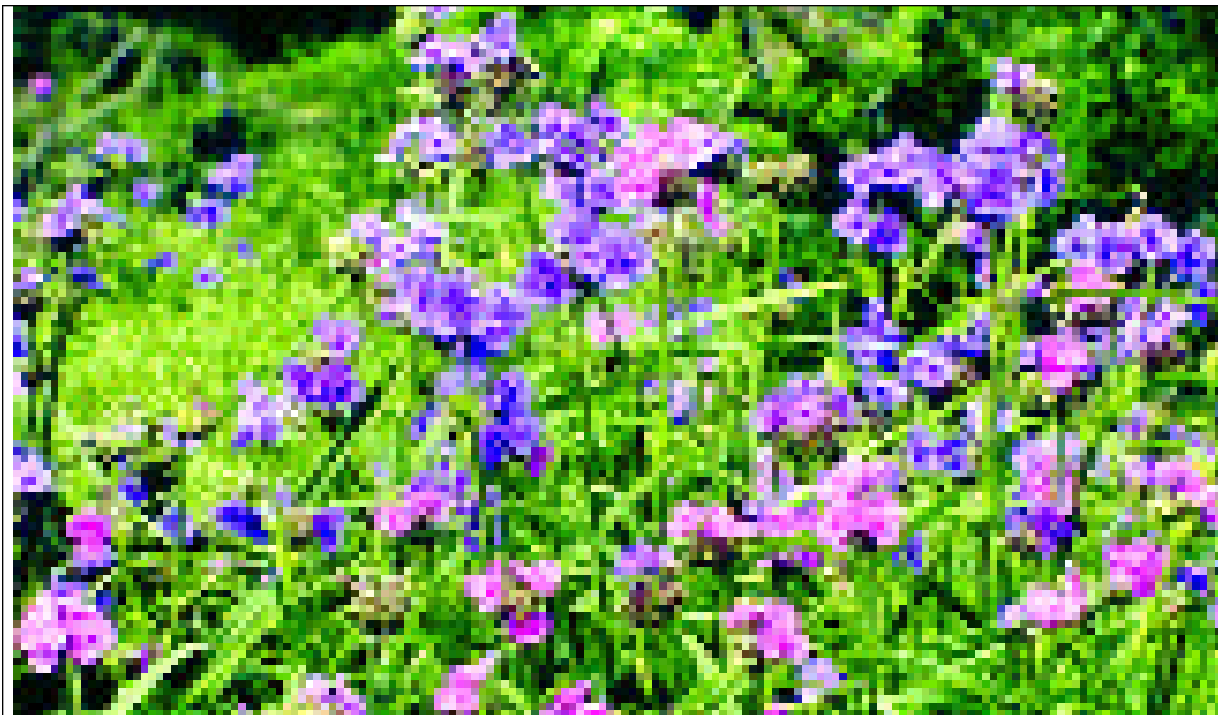
SINCE 1912



Bob Daemrick

Some people just age well. Lady Bird Johnson celebrated her 91st birthday with a small group of close friends and family at the Wildflower Center on her birthday, Dec. 22. The opportunity to spend another birthday at her cherished namesake was a delight to Mrs. Johnson, who has loved nature since her youth. In attendance

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were friends like Mrs. Johnson's former press secretary, Liz Carpenter, and daughters Lynda Robb, and Luci Baines Johnson.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

National Wildflower Week is May 2-8, 2004. A celebration of wildflowers since 1987, National Wildflower Week encourages kids and adults across the country to observe, cultivate, and study native wildflowers in their own community as a means of deepening their relationship with nature. Learn more about National Wildflower Week on our web site at www.wildflower.org and be sure to look for events in your area in the National Events Calendar. Chances are, there is a National Wildflower Week event happening near you. 🌸

Virginia Spiderwort is an interesting and long-blooming understory perennial for native-plant gardens, woodland or shade gardens, or naturalized areas.

ously pubescent, the stems having inconspicuous, minute hairs. The leaves are glabrous (smooth) and basally sheathed, with bracts subtending the inflorescence along the stem.

RANGE *T. virginiana* is native to the eastern and midwest North American continent, from Connecticut to Wisconsin, south to Georgia, and west to Tennessee and Missouri.

HABITAT Found on moist shaded bluffs, open wooded slopes, or on the margins of woods, in a variety of well-drained, rich soils of circumneutral pH range (6.8 to 7.2).

PROPAGATION Virginia spiderwort produces a small, light-green rounded capsule that matures 2 to 3 weeks after flowering. Fresh sown seed germinates in 2 weeks. The seed may also be sown after cold, moist stratification. Spiderwort species hybridize freely; isolate flowers of the plant and hand-pollinate to ensure propagules that bear true to species. The plant may be vegetatively propagated by division in early fall or spring.

GARDENING Virginia spiderwort may be grown in average, medium-wet, well-drained soil in full sun to dappled shade. Placement is most effective along the border of a formal shade garden or as an understory specimen at the edge of a woodland garden. The foliage begins to decline after the period of bloom. Selective pruning by cutting back to the ground specimens in decline encourages new growth and possible fall bloom. Clumps should be divided when they become overcrowded.

USE The variation in hues from blue to purple, along with the striking prominent yellow anthers and consistent seasonal flowers, make this jewel stand out as a foreground or understory planting in a shade garden. Virginia spiderwort is an interesting and long-blooming understory perennial for native-plant gardens, woodland or shade gardens, or naturalized areas. Additional detailed information may be obtained from the Wildflower Center's Web site: www.wildflower.org. — S. BRUEGGERHOFF 🌸