

The Turk's Cap

The Newsletter of the Delaware Native Plant Society

Winter 2025-2026 Volume 28 No. 4

DNPS Mission Statement:

Founded in March 1998, we are a volunteer-based, publicly supported 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of native plants and their natural habitats through education, science, advocacy, and land stewardship.

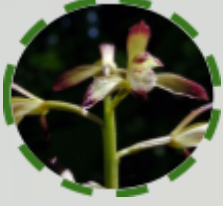
Discover more at <https://delawarenativeplants.org>



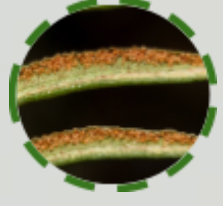
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President: Eric Wahl ● Vice-President: Rick Mickowski ● Treasurer: Eric Zuelke ● Secretary: Emma Johnson

Letter From Our President

Eric Wahl

Dear Members and Friends,

As winter settles across Delaware, our native landscapes rest, storing the energy that will fuel spring's renewal. This quiet season invites reflection—on the resilience of our native plants, the dedication of our volunteers, and the growing community committed to protecting our state's natural heritage. Thanks to your support, we've held educational programs, strengthened conservation partnerships, and inspired new stewards of native flora. In the months ahead, we look forward to workshops, field walks, and advocacy efforts that deepen our impact. Together, we ensure Delaware's native plants continue to thrive for generations to come.

Warm regards,

Eric Wahl

President, Delaware Native Plant Society

Connect with the DNPS on [Facebook](#)
And explore the DNPS at: <https://delawarenativeplants.org/>

Circle photographs

Epilobium coloratum- purple-leaf willowherb

Aplectrum hyemale- puttyroot

Pellaea atropurpurea- purple-stem cliff-brake fern (spores)

Lilium superbum - Turk's cap lily

Photographs courtesy of David G. Smith at www.delawarewildflowers.org

Membership upgrades

We finally have another option to our membership process that many people have probably been wanting for quite awhile. We were just waiting for the right way to do it that was cost-effective and easy to use. We finally found it! Here's a breakdown of our new options to join the DNPS. All of this will be posted on our website as well.

Our original analog method

(for those who don't have a credit card, or prefer to use checks)

Just as we've always had, we will maintain our membership form on the website that can be printed out and mailed to our P.O. Box along with a check. Along with this, we will continue to email the first membership renewal announcement at your one-year renewal date, then snail mail two more announcements on the following months as additional reminders if we don't hear from you. At the end of that third month, if we have not heard from you, your membership will automatically end.

Our new on-line electronic method

(for those who don't have checks, or prefer to use credit cards, bank auto-pay, or <https://cash.app/cash-app-pay>)

We have created an account on www.buymeacoffee.com. This is a site that offers a way for content creators to allow supporters to donate money to them to support their content and businesses. The site not only caters to creators, but to non-profits as well, and for no fees for the transactions.

For those who want to use this method, just go to:
<https://buymeacoffee.com/denativeplantsociety>

You can send us a one-time donation of any amount, or you can join the DNPS as a member at four different levels, or you can renew your existing membership. As a member, you can submit your dues on a monthly or annual basis, and there will be no reminders from us to renew; your membership will continue for as long as you desire. You will receive email announcements from us about Society events (be sure to include your email in the checkout window).

We hope this new upgrade will make life easier for everyone and increase our overall membership. And as an existing member, your support is appreciated, and thank you!

Membership Application

Member Benefits:

Quarterly "The Turk's Cap" Newsletter

Tips and tricks on gardening and landscaping with native plants

Annual workshop, symposium, project work days, and field trips!

- Full-time Student \$10*
- Individual \$15*
- Family \$18*
- Contributing \$50*
- Business \$100*
- Lifetime \$500*

Membership is for 12 months, after which we send you a renewal notice.

MEMBER INFORMATION

Name: _____

Organization Name: _____

Full mailing address: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Please make checks payable to:

Delaware Native Plant Society

P.O. Box 369

Dover, DE 19903

Fundraising & Donations

To support our rewilding efforts and habitat creation projects around the state, we have set up two new ways for anyone, anywhere to donate to our cause.

🍁 BUY ME A COFFEE (but for us, we're calling it BUY US A NATIVE PLANT)

Just go to <https://buymeacoffee.com/denativeplantsociety> where you can submit a one-time donation of any amount. We also have this link on our website on our membership & donations page:

<https://delawarenativeplants.org/2019/01/01/membership/>

🍫 YUM-RAISING WITH SEE'S CANDIES

If you'd like to combine your love of chocolate, nut chews and jelly beans with support of our rewilding projects, then we have made it super easy to do with our See's Candies fundraiser.

Go to:

<https://www.yumraising.com/store/spring-2026-delaware-native-plant-society-6e3e/EriZue62510>

This will land you in the Delaware Native Plant Society store where you can purchase from a wide variety of See's Candies products.

A portion of every purchase will be donated to us in the form of a check at the end of our fundraising campaign, which for this particular one is 21 March 2026.

Please share this link with anyone and everyone who likes sweets. The more interest we get the better. Thanks.



Fall Symposium Recap

Check out this [LINK](#) to the symposium to catch some great info!

Brittany Haywood and Edna Stetzar presented information on SAVs
-Submerged Aquatic Vegetation

Intros by Rick Mickowski, Eric Zuelke, Emma Johnson
Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) ice cream by Bob Meadows





The Contrarian Gardener

Buzzby Filchheimer

Toxicodendronology

Many of us have a challenge with poison ivy growing on our property. I have it on some oak trees and running along a fence.

I know what you are thinking, what do I do about it? For starters a mix of 11-11 nitrogen phosphate fertilizer will help produce the full growth you desire. Strong hairy vines, good autumn color and plentiful white berries. Then you will cultivate a PI vine to be proud of and show off to the neighborhood.

An Autumn 'hack' for leaf removal

This nifty trick is from former neighbor Miller Cornwell. Like so many of us he got tired of raking leaves. Inspiration struck and out came the Hoover vacuum cleaner. Mr. Cornwell vacuumed his small front lawn and never touched a rake. Neat and tidy. With good aim he unzipped the bag and put the leaves in his trash. This is not recommended for larger lawns, farms or with stick type vacuums. Let us know how this works out for you.

Editor's note:

Winter is a time when the days are short and we often need a pick-me-up!

The contrarian gardener is a segment by a person who intends good humor and good fun for that very purpose!



Perception

Emma Johnson

The world around us is what we make of it. Our own senses connect us to nature, and sometimes, nature has its own responses to sensations that we calibrate. I recommend checking out these resources to explore nature through nature's senses:

Sound

Building healthy "[soundscapes](#)" for microbiota and macrobiota.

Not a plant - Mushrooms hooked to electrodes that can interpret electrical signals made by any living macroscopic organism and turn it into [music](#).

[Ultrasonic algae control](#) in [Williston Lake](#), at Girl Scout Camp Todd - part of the Girl Scouts of the Chesapeake Bay visited by scouts from Delaware, Maryland and Virginia.

Scent

I always recommend "[An Immense World](#)" by Ed Yong for our closest understanding of what it's like to perceive through the senses of other organisms. It allowed me to paint color-shifted Mondrian-inspired art for my arthropods-in-law! One of the things the book discusses is how closely linked human senses of scent and taste are. From our perspective, it would be hard to discern exactly how a swallowtail perceives a pawpaw plant as a source food for its caterpillars. But they find them nonetheless! Here's a Delaware Nature Society article about [increasing the zebra swallowtail population at Ashland Nature Center](#).

Taste

The American Hazelnut, *Corylus Americana* - excerpt from a publication by the Arbor Day Foundation: "The American hazelnut"... "is a native shrub of the eastern United States. The tasty nuts are highly prized by cooks for their easy-to-crack shells and small, sweet kernel. Squirrels love them as well... mostly likely for the same reasons. Hazelnut hedges can be used as windbreaks, visual screens, and to attract wildlife.

Leaves: Generally an oval shape with a heart-shaped or rounded base, doubly serrated, and dark green in color. Measuring 2 ½ - 6 inches long and 1 ½ - 2 ½ inches wide. Flowers: Inconspicuous red female flowers and showy yellowish-brown male catkins produced on same plant. Fruit: ½ inch brown hazelnuts that typically grow in bunches of two to six, each with a sweet, round kernel inside. Harvested from September to October. Two or more shrubs are needed to ensure a good crop. Form: Grows to a height of 15-18 feet with a spread of 10-12 feet at maturity. The multi-stemmed form grows in a rounded shape with an open, often wide-spreading base. Wildlife Value: The nuts are preferred by squirrels, deer, turkey, woodpeckers, pheasants, grouse, quail, and jays. The male catkins are a food staple of ruffed grouse and turkey throughout the winter. The dense, low-growing shape provides cover and nesting sites for many wildlife species. Planting: Suitable in hardiness zones 4-9. Prefers

full or partial sun. Grows in acidic, alkaline, loamy, moist, rich, sandy, well-drained, and clay-soils. Drought tolerant.”

Here are some notes from a previous Old Farmer’s Almanac calendar around the colder months:

October p. 143

The concord grapes ripening “feed a host of wildlife, including bears, foxes, ruffed grouse, quail, wild turkeys, and many species of songbirds. The unmistakable fragrance of Concord grapes carries so far that the best way to find them is with your nose.” To make jelly, “place 5 pounds of crushed grapes in a large saucepan. Add 2 cups of water, bring to a boil, then simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Strain through cheesecloth, measuring out 5 ½ cups of juice. Place 3 ¼ cups of sugar in a large saucepan and stir in one box (1.75 oz.) of low-sugar pectin and the measured juice. Bring to a full boil, stirring constantly. Immediately stir in ¼ cup more sugar. Bring to a full boil for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Skim foam. Ladle into 8-ounce sterilized jars and cover. Process in a boiling-water bath for 5 minutes.”

February p. 127

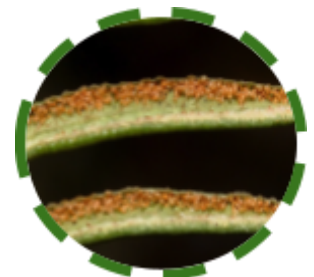
Noting peanut-butter and seed-decorated pinecones to feed birds in winter, this excerpt also shared a fun craft for winter camping. “Hook wires to the tops of dry, seedless pinecones and soak in melted wax. Add crayons for color. For white flames, coat with Epsom salt, for yellow, table salt, and for violet, salt substitute.”

March p. 129

A flashback to winter, “sapsicles” from “sugar maples, red maples, sweet birches, black walnuts, box elders, and butternuts” - a sweet winter treat for people and apparently butterflies alike - mourning cloak butterflies have a long lifespan, and can find nutrients from frozen sap dripping off broken winter tree branches.

A cool-weather reminder from Delaware Online:

Starting in 2015 at Delaware Seashore State Park, in late winter to very early spring, hundreds of volunteers including students in the University of Delaware Associate in Arts Program participate in an annual, incredible effort to plant dune grasses that prevent erosion.



AI Data Centers and Deforestation

Eric Zuelke

A new threat is entering the state of Delaware and it promises to be catastrophic in nature. AI data centers are being built around the country at an alarming rate, and there are several proposals for Delaware in the works. These data centers have been labeled an existential crisis, and for good reason. They claim to be good for humanity by extending the reach of technology in our everyday lives, but simultaneously they destroy nature and human connections to nature with their sprawling technology centers, humongous energy demands, and profound depletions of water, all on lands that are incapable of supporting such use. I work in the IT industry and have done short-term work in several data centers on the eastern shore of Maryland and I've seen first-hand the imposing stature of a data center. It's simultaneously breathtaking, and horrifying! You would think that being in the industry I would be a proponent of this, but I am not! I find their unmitigated construction abhorrent!

They also claim to help all of us by creating hundreds of jobs. It is highly likely that the very specialized jobs that will be created will not be filled by residents of Delaware. Those positions will be given to highly trained, experienced people that live outside of our state and will move here for those jobs from nearby large cities. So how does that help Delawareans needing work?

One aspect of these data centers that seems to be completely ignored in the headlines is deforestation. The huge energy demands, and incredible water consumption take top billing in our opposition to them, but the developers building these giant campuses cut down hundreds of trees to make room for the buildings and parking lots. In my own personal life with the DNPS, and in our endeavors to create forest, calling this AI boom an existential crisis is an understatement considering that it takes the DNPS decades worth of effort to grow an acre of forest, while one bulldozer and a feller buncher can rip down an acre of forest in a matter of minutes. It's a disparity of profound magnitude, and it can't go on!

Congressional leaders in our government have called for a moratorium on the construction of AI data centers until we can get a handle on the impact they are having, but the overly manipulative tech powers that be will have none of that. The land grabs, and money to be made are too powerful in their minds for the folly of a moratorium. If we're not careful, it won't be until the dust settles that those of us at the bottom of the power pyramid realize how we've been defrauded of our valuable natural resources, and the connection to nature those resources could have afforded us.

Because of clauses in our non-profit status, the DNPS is not able to lobby politically, but as citizens we are all able to, and now is the time to raise your voice in defense of our forests. Do your homework! Educate yourself and your family on this topic. Research what's going on in our state with these data centers, then speak up, and do your part to be an earth-conscious person in your everyday actions and decisions. The oaks, and hickories, and maples of your childrens and grandchildrens future depend on it!

Here are some good places to start:

<https://www.sierraclub.org/delaware/blog/2025/07/data-centers>

<https://spotlightdelaware.org/2025/12/16/two-new-castle-county-industrial-projects-may-become-data-centers/>

<https://spotlightdelaware.org/2025/07/29/new-data-center-rules-proposed-new-castle-county/>

<https://www.nwf.org/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2025/Fall/Conservation/AI-Data-Centers>

<https://sites.uab.edu/navigatinggenai pedagogy/student-perspective-data-centers-deforestation-and-doing-our-part/>

<https://greenpaperproducts.com/>

Reforestation projects need many critical components for their success:

- Land to do the project on
- Live plants, seeds, and the materials and equipment to plant them and manage them for years
- Money to buy those plants and materials
- Human hands to install the plants and do vegetation management

Your financial support is one of the most critical aspects of our projects. Your membership dues, donations, gifts, and other contributions, no matter how small, allow us to make these reforestation projects a reality, and projects such as these do make a difference in the global aspiration to preserve our natural world. We hope that the addition of an electronic payment process to our organization makes it easier for everyone to contribute to our locally-based effort.

Time is also a critical donation. Please reach out and tell us if you'd like to volunteer. We always need volunteers. Boots on the ground is the other critical piece of this puzzle.

And please spread the word about our fundraising campaign with See's Candies. It's a great opportunity to extend the scope of what we can accomplish.

Do More with Native Plants!



The next time you need a license plate, go for the 2021 “Best Plate Award” winner - DMV [Special Plate Sales](#) “Pollinator” design!

Plant Search Resources:

[Flora of Delaware Database](#)

[Mid-Atlantic Native Plant Directory](#)

Native Plant Nurseries to Support:

[Blooming Meadow Nursery in Dagsboro](#)

[Gateway Garden Center](#) - not strictly native, but a great selection of native plants!

[Heritage: A Native Plant Nursery](#) - coming soon to Sussex County!

[Josie’s Native Plants](#)

[The Naked Oak Tree Farm](#)

Volunteer

- Herbaria - [Del State](#) Claude E. Phillips Herbarium, [Zooniverse](#) (Online)
- Certifications - [Master Gardener](#), [Master Naturalist](#)
- [Delaware Habitat Guardians](#)

Brandywine De-Viners (Or “Bran-de-viners” as I like to call them)

Be a De-Vine hero and join the effort to remove invasive vines from trees in our urban forest. [Brandywine Ivy Removal](#) is a volunteer effort that meets Saturday mornings (10:00 am - 12:00 pm) in winter to cut English ivy and other strangling vines in Brandywine Park. January through March 2026. Location changes weekly, so email PlantLadyLucy@gmail.com for details.

Invasive Vine Removal

Join us as we remove strangling vines from trees in Brandywine Park, and meet others who are passionate about a healthy park ecosystem.

No experience necessary - learn plant ID skills and how to manage invasive plants.

JOIN US!

- Bring: pruners, loppers, small hand saws, chisels & work gloves
- Wear: long pants, long sleeves & closed toed shoes
- Children welcome (with adult supervision)

SATURDAYS

November - March

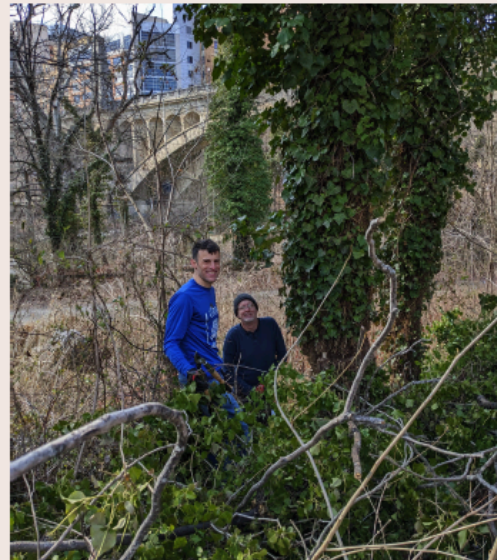
10:00am - 12:00pm



Meeting Location changes weekly.
Reach out to learn more!



Screenshot



CONTACT: Lucy Dinsmore
PlantLadyLucy@gmail.com

Nearby

Chester County PA Conservation District [lawn conservation program](#)

[Maryland Native Plant Society](#)

[New Jersey Native Plant Society](#)

[Pennsylvania Native Plant Society](#)

Programs and Places:

Recent:

- January 7-9th - Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show ([MANTS](#)), Baltimore Convention Center
- January 10th - [Christmas Tree Recycling Event](#), Delaware Center for Horticulture

Upcoming:

- January 19th- 1-3PM [MLK Day of Service Ivy Removal](#)
 - Bundle up and join other tree huggers in the park. The De-Viners are teaming up with Wilmington State Parks and Brandywine Zoo to host a giant ivy removal effort in the park. Volunteers will gather at the Josephine Fountain and then walk to South Park Drive for the work party. South Park Drive will be closed for the next few months while work is completed on the I-95 bridge.
- January 24th - Longwood Gardens [Science in Action Day](#) & Panel Discussion
- February 13th - [Greenscapes Symposium](#), Online: Zoom
- [American Fern Society](#) - and spore exchange
- [American Horticultural Society](#)- nationwide Garden Network
- [Brandywine Conservancy](#) & Museum of Art
 - A great winter activity. Buy native seeds collected on-site in the gift shop for plants with provenance close to New Castle County, DE.
 - On display now: *Jerrell Gibbs: No Solace in the Shade*. *Gibbs' work is Baltimore-based, and as such the background landscapes and plants such as in "For Thomas" alludes to scenery from our area of the world while also paying tribute to other art and artists, while capturing life from an entirely new perspective.*
 - Emma the editor's favorite painting: "Boys Planting" by Jerrell Gibbs
 - Other paintings to visit:
 - "Pennsylvania Landscape [/Lafayette's Headquarters]" by Andrew Wyeth featuring a quintessentially regional sycamore
 - "August, 1974" by George Weymouth featuring a meadow so familiar it looks like a photograph of the hill atop Ashland Nature Center, or Brandywine Creek State Park, or any piedmont hill in that area of the Brandywine Valley
 - "New Jersey Salt Marsh" by Martin Johnson Heade. The description is one of the most unique and compelling insights into a period of time before our own in terms of people's perspectives on overlooked natural spaces
- [Delaware Botanic Gardens](#) Programs and Events, visit Thu-Sun 9AM-4PM
- [Delaware Cooperative Extension & Master Gardener Workshops](#) -Live & Zoom
- [Delaware Nature Society](#) & [DuPont Environmental Education Center](#)
 - Read about DNS [tree restoration](#) here

- [Delaware State Parks](#)
- [Green Drinks Online](#) Third Mondays Monthly 6:15-7:45PM
- [Mt. Cuba Center](#)
- [University of Delaware Botanic Gardens](#)
- [Wilmington City Council](#) and [Northeast Rising](#) [Wilmington Initiatives](#) at Conscious Connections Urban Farm

Books:

- “Doctors by Nature: How Ants, Apes, and Other Animals Heal Themselves” - Jaap de Roode
- “Do Plants Know Math? Unwinding the Story of Plant Spirals, from Leonardo da Vinci to Now”- Stéphane Douady, Jacques Dumais, Christophe Golé, and Nancy Pick
- “Climate-Wise Landscaping: Practical Actions for a Sustainable Future, Second Edition” - Sue Reed and Ginny Stibolt
- “Color in Nature”- Justin Marshall, Thomas Cronin, Sönke Johnsen, Ron Douglas, Anya Hurlbert, Jane Boddy, and Fabio Cortesi
- “The Little Book of Fungi”- Britt A. Bunyard

Books for Younger Audiences:

- [Max and the Milkweed](#) - a fun first introduction to monarchs and their migration and life cycle!
- [Plants to the Rescue!](#) - this is just fun + science = how awesome plants are.
- [Prunella](#) - a great book for any budding naturalist! Particularly one who likes the spooky side of plants!

Educational Cards:

- [Herbs & Medicinal Plants Knowledge Cards](#) - produced by the Academy of Natural Sciences
- [Plant Health Swatch Book](#)

Keep Up-to-date with News:

- [Spotlight Delaware](#)
 - Sussex County [Wetlands](#)
 - [DNREC gas leak](#)
 - Kent County [Water Conservation](#)
 - New Castle County Energy Usage from [Data Centers](#)
 - [Offshore Wind](#)

