

# THE TURK'S CAP

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*THE NEWSLETTER OF THE DELAWARE NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY*

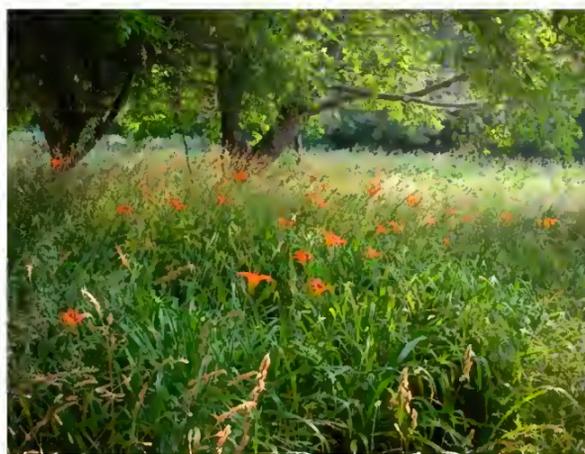
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## NATURAL QUOTES

“Under the spreading chestnut tree  
the village smithy stands.”

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



Summer at Newcroft

## HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

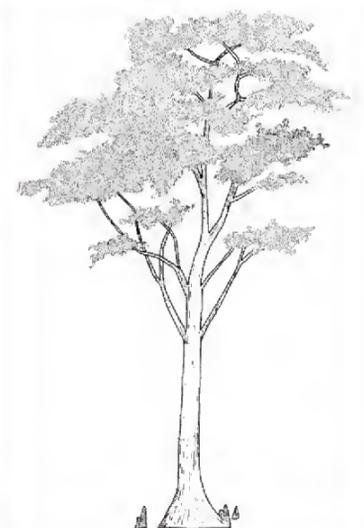
The Delaware Native Plant Society is open to everyone ranging from the novice gardener to the professional botanist. One of the primary goals of the society is to involve as many individuals as possible.

The DNPS is working on some significant projects at this time. We have completed four reforestation projects in the Prime Hook area, at Blackbird Creek in New Castle County and Cedar Creek in Sussex County where we have installed tree tubes around newly sprouted seedlings, and are performing annual management of the sites. Help is also needed at our native plant nursery at the St. Jones Reserve with the monitoring and watering of plants along with many other nursery activities.

For more information, visit our website at [www.delawarenativeplants.org](http://www.delawarenativeplants.org). Our very informative, up-to-date website has all the contact information for the Society, along with a section on native plants, volunteering, and links to other environmental and plant related organizations.

## The DNPS Vision

The purpose of the Delaware Native Plant Society (DNPS) is to participate in and encourage the preservation, conservation, restoration, and propagation of Delaware's native plants and plant communities. The Society provides information to government officials, business people, educators, and the general public on the protection, management, and restoration of native plant ecosystems. The DNPS encourages the use of native plants in the landscape by homeowners, businesses, and local and state governments through an on-going distribution of information and knowledge by various means that includes periodic publications, symposia, conferences, workshops, field trips, and a growing statewide membership organized by the DNPS.



## Notes from Newcroft

As a tree lover, I've been wanting to explore the state of the American chestnut tree, *Castanea dentata*. Dire statistics about its demise have been published for decades. A trip to Solomons Island in Maryland recently was a good opportunity to stop by the American Chestnut Land Trust. I checked online to confirm the location and anticipated seeing one last standing old American chestnut. Arriving at the preserve, we found trail maps which included a note that the "namesake" tree had blown down in 2006. When the land trust was founded in 1986, that gentle giant was the MD Champion (largest known living specimen American chestnut tree in MD). Despite the disappointment in not seeing the tree, we enjoyed a two-mile hike on the beautiful Ridge Loop Trail.

Subsequent research, indicates that efforts to cultivate a disease resistant American chestnut have been going on for many decades. See other article in right column.

Recently, a book club I'm in, *Natural Selections*, discussed Gilbert White's "A Natural History of Selborne" (see below) in conjunction with Verlyn Klinkenborg's "Timothy: or Notes of an Abject Reptile." White's book is out-of-print but Klinkenborg's is available. Verlyn is the "Rural Life" columnist for the NY Times. Gilbert White was one of the first naturalists to publish his observations (1789) and is widely quoted in nature writings. (See the note on "American Eden" at the top of page 5)

White was an inveterate notekeeper. Do you keep a nature journal? Our book group's August 3 discussion will be on "[Keeping a Nature Journal](#)" by Clare Walker Leslie and Charles E. Roth, 2003 edition. Come join us at 6:30 p.m. at Lewes Library.

Cindy Albright  
cindy@cindyalbright.com

## Kensington arborist, saving a legacy\*

*Man battles to protect the American chestnut tree species from bugs and blight*

By Alex Ruott

In the past five years, Ron Kuipers has driven 1,000s of miles to mow grass, pull weeds and build fences to help spur the growth of the once-ubiquitous American chestnut tree. By the early 1950s, fewer than 1,000 remained uninfected by a fungal blight that threatened to wipe out the species. Apart from the threat of fungal infection, the trees also face danger from deer, rabbits, raccoons and other creatures that are attracted to the smell of the chestnuts and saplings, he said.

Kuipers, a volunteer orchard manager for the Maryland chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation, helps maintain the roughly 4,000 trees planted by the foundation. With an annual budget of less than \$5,000 it shares resources with Virginia's chapter.

When a tree reaches maturity, Kuipers will give it one last test: He gives it the fungus to see how resistant the tree is to infection. Four out of 100 trees raised survive. The nuts are gathered and crossbred in the hopes of finding a new generation of sustainable American chestnut trees. The rest are cut down.

Last year, the foundation planted orchards in Carroll County, Black Hill Regional Park in northern Montgomery County and near Fort Detrick in Frederick County.

More than 50 orchards exist in 10 states, all tended by chapters of the national group.

\* The Gazette, Washington Post, June 2, 2011

**["The Natural History of Selborne 1789"](#) by Gilbert White, edited with an Introduction by Paul Foster, Oxford University Press, 1993**

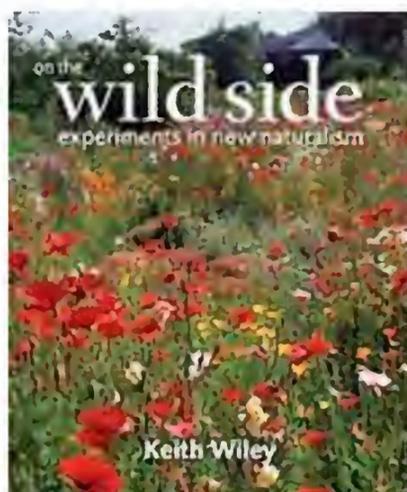
...a distillation of a lifetime of observation. His main aims were to induce readers to pay more attention to the wonders around them and to advance their knowledge of the variety of life..

## Resources & Reviews

### [Sibley Guide to Trees](#)

David Allan Sibley, 464 pgs.

With the same attention to detail given in his bird guides, Sibley's book offers several illustrations of flowers, leaves, bark, fruits and seed pods for each tree species.



### [On the Wild Side: Experiments in New Naturalism](#)

by Keith Wiley\*

Timber Press, 2011

#### **Alien invasion**

When, if ever, does an introduced species become accepted as a *bona fide* wild flower? There must be some point in the future, albeit a long way off, when those gaillardias, if they naturalize and spread, will be included among the native flora. Such stalwarts in England as the sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) and horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) both introduced species have already made this transition. It is quite a pleasant mental pastime to imagine which of the vast range of plant species introduced into our gardens over the last 50 years or so will make that leap and become naturalized into the countryside over the next few hundred years. "Ecological purists will be seething but personally I welcome the added richness that these introduced plant species bring to the UK as long as they are not categorized as native wild flowers."

However, in parts of the world with more equitable climates for rapid plant growth than the UK, such as S. Africa, California and corners of Australia, alien invasion is a major problem.

\*Keith Wiley was head gardener at Great House in SW England (Somerset) between 1978 and 2003. It became a showcase for his uniquely individual brand of naturalistic planting. He lectures on both sides of the Atlantic.

### ***Native Plant Garden and Road to it kept clean by ...***

#### **Adopt-A-Highway project at Hugh Sharp Campus**

The Delaware Department of Transportation says its Adopt-A-Highway program is "about people caring enough to make a difference." Volunteers from the University of Delaware's Hugh R. Sharp Campus demonstrated their commitment to the environment recently, when they held their first [Adopt-A-Highway](#) cleanup of Pilottown Road in Lewes.

The campus has adopted a two-mile stretch of the road near the campus, which sits near the mouth of the Delaware Bay. As part of the project, volunteers will take part in at least three cleanups a year in which they collect litter and debris from the road.

"A number of us walking or biking that road noticed a general accumulation of trash so we asked about adopting the highway," said Joe Farrell, a resource management specialist with Delaware Sea Grant who organized the effort.

For members of the Lewes campus, environmental stewardship is all in a day's work. Research taking place at the complex benefits everything from water quality to fish populations. Their efforts have also made the campus itself more environmentally friendly. It is powered by the clean energy of a [wind turbine](#) and landscaping includes a [native plant garden](#) and recently installed [demonstration rain garden](#). Keeping a nearby road clean was an obvious next step, Farrell said.

"The road is adjacent to marshes," he said. "Those marshes flood over and the trash gets washed directly into Canary Creek or Delaware Bay. We think this will make the area cleaner and nicer for the people and the environment, including the wildlife, that live here."

Delaware College of Earth, Ocean & Environment,  
[Sea Grant 2011 Annual Report](#)

**GARDENING WITH NATIVE PLANTS**

Common elderberry  
*Sambucus canadensis*

by Bob Edelen

**Natural History**

Are you searching for a plant that provides heavy summer fruit production, is a desired deer browse and has a tendency to form thickets that provide valuable escape and thermal cover: Look no further. An elderberry meets all of these needs. Native to central and eastern North America it grows from Nova Scotia and the Dakotas and south all the way to Mexico.



Elderberry shrub in Lewes Herb Garden, June 2011

Common elderberry occurs naturally in open or semi-open sites with fertile, moist soils such as stream edges, swamps, bogs, old fields, pastures, fencerows, and roadside ditches. However, although elderberry prefers full sun, it can also grow on sites with up to 66 percent shade. Look for it in forest interiors as well. Normally found between 6 to 12 feet tall, elderberry often grows in small colonies by means of rhizomes and a shallow system of lateral roots, called stolons. It is also thicket-forming, with many tightly clustered stems arising from one base, giving the shrub an overall round shape. Elderberry can tolerate a soil pH of 5.5 to 7.5 with a range of 5.5 to 6.0 recommended for optimal growth.

Whole leaves of elderberry are opposite, compound (five to 11 leaflets), 4- to 12-inches long and have finely serrated edges. The upper leaf surface is usually glossy and smooth; the lower surface is paler and barely fuzzy. Its main stems are woody with a core of white pith. Elderberry bark is one of its most distinguishing characteristics, ranging from light to grayish brown and dotted with prominent cork-like lenticels. Smaller lateral branches have dark green bark and usually die back in the winter. White flowers appear in umbrella-shaped clusters most often

between April and July and sporadically later in the year. Later, the fruit develops in groups atop the same stalks, now red as a smooth purple-black usually ripening from July through September. Elderberry produces an astounding 175,000 to 468,000 seeds per pound of berries!

Elderberry is rated as a good-to-excellent plant to use for wildlife habitat improvement and is considered one of the best summer-fruiting native shrubs. It is highly recommended as a wildlife food and cover plant in farmland shelterbelts, windbreaks and woody cover areas.

Its fruit is an important soft mast source for 50 species of songbirds and game birds, including the wild turkey, ring-necked pheasant, mourning dove, ruffed grouse and northern bobwhite. In most parts of the range, berries are available in summer and fall, and foliage is present from spring until frost. Its fruit is usually eaten as soon as it ripens and may be unavailable as a winter food source. White-tailed deer will consume its berries, foliage, twigs and bark. Some researchers report that deer preference of elderberry varies from low to medium and that the plant is more readily eaten in the northern part of its range (West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and New York) than in the southern states. However, regular fall deer use has been reported in Louisiana and Georgia, even when preferred honeysuckles and greenbriers were abundant.

The relative nutritional value of elderberry fruit is considered moderate for crude protein (11-14 percent) and high for crude fat (16 percent) and phosphorus (0.75 percent). In addition, elderberry leaves and stems typically retain crude protein levels of 18 percent and 7 percent, respectively, which is higher than the crude protein levels of most deer browse.

(continued on page 5)

**Resources and Reviews**

Flowering Earth

By Donald Culross Peattie

"By night the moths take over, fertilizing the night-blooming flowers. This tribe of the feathery antennae have some of them tongues incredibly long, coiled like a watchspring that can probe the deepest corolla."

## Resources and Reviews

### [“American Eden: From Monticello to Central Park to Our Backyards: What our gardens tell us about who we are”](#)

By Wade Graham, published by Harper Collins, 2011

Graham covers one of the first examples of ecological thinking in 1789 when Gilbert White published *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* to the High Line Park in NYC, where wild nature is in the heart of the postindustrial city...new pastoral urbanism.”

## GARDENING WITH NATIVE PLANTS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

### Propagation

Elderberry can be propagated by seed, seedlings, or cuttings, all of which are commercially available. Fruits and cuttings can also be easily removed from wild plants without injury to the plant. For maximum fruit production and growth, elderberry should be established where soil, moisture and shade requirements are appropriate. The area may be disked or harrowed where large numbers of seedling are to be planted (such as in rows of shelterbelts.) When only one or a few seedlings will be planted, the size of the area to be cleared, usually 2 to 4 feet, will depend on the size of seedlings, size of competing vegetation and site erosion potential. If herbicides are applied to remove vegetation, spraying should be done in the fall before the seedlings are planted. Once established, elderberry plants are generally hardy, strong growers that tolerate severe pruning. Weed control will be vital during the first three to five years after planting.

### *Gardening with Delmarva's Native Grasses*

By Gayle Jayne

Maryland Master Gardeners of Queen Anne's County brochure published in cooperation with Adkins Arboretum

This brochure lists seven native grasses that grow well together: Broomsedge (*Andropogon virginicus*), Eastern gamagrass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*); Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), Little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*); Purple lovegrass (*Eragrostis spectabilis*); Sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*) and Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*)



### [Grasses: Versatile Partners for Uncommon Garden Design](#)

By Nancy Ondra

No longer relegated to back-of-the-border backdrops for showy perennials or space-filling solutions for inconsequential garden areas, ornamental grasses are moving front and center as befits their versatile, adaptable, and irresistible nature. From their burnished glow when backlit by a setting sun to the textural richness they bring to a mixed border, grasses offer much in the way of gardening excitement and distinction yet require little maintenance in return. After succinctly covering the cultural basics of grass gardening, Ondra concentrates her efforts on extolling their multifaceted design distinctions. For every garden element, from borders, pathways, and containers to location challenges such as shade, slopes and screening, Ondra's capsule "designer's choices" offer brief but essential descriptions to aid in plant selection and planning considerations, and quick-reference lists highlight grasses that work well in such diverse conditions as hot-and-dry sites and low-and-wet bogs. Supported by Saxon Holt's captivating color photographs, Ondra elevates grasses from garden understudies to starring roles.

Amazon review by Carol Haggas

## All Aboard the High Line in NYC\*

A fresh public garden shines atop an old elevated railway

By Tovah Martin

A garden writer and speaker from CT



High Line Park NYC Fall 2010 .  
Walk goes under hotel

A meadow blooms in the Big Apple, a woodland has sprung up amid the hubbub of Manhattan.

An elevated rail line about the Meatpacking District slipped into disuse by the 1960's. Nature took over and created a haunting beauty amid the old railroad ties. Some perceived it as an eyesore. Others saw the subtle majesty of the ecosystem that had evolved. Supporters in the now high-end, savvy section of the city raised money and got the ball rolling to turn the High Line into a park.

Rather than erase what nature had sown, they emulated the beauty of the abandoned rail space, bolstered it with similar plantings and created a way the public could safely interact with a natural space. Visitors often ask about prairie dropseed *Sporobolus heterolepis*, a native grass. Flashier plants include rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*), *Echinacea purpurea*, compass plant (*Silphium laciniatum*) and prairie blazing star (*Liatris spicata*). The landscape is left intact even when flowers fade and go to seed. "We show nature in all its majesty and in each of its stages" notes Patrick Cullian, VP of Horticulture and Park Operations, "from bud to senescence. Brown is a color, too."

In 2009, the first nine blocks opened. Another 10 blocks opened this spring. See the recent [Wall Street Journal](#) article about the development of the High Line. Also see the website: [www.thehighline.org/](http://www.thehighline.org/)

\*Article from *Horticulture* magazine Feb/March 2011

## From [Tovah Martin's Blog](#)

June 14, 2011

"My neighbor pulled beside me on my daily walk and rolled down her window. "Sorry," she said apologetically, "but my lawn mower is on the fritz." I ask you. Do I look like the type of person who loves a lawn? Do I strike you as the type who goes ballistic at the first hint of a dandelion? So I had to respond, 'Have you looked at my lawn lately?' She rolled up her window and went home. Hopefully, she then noticed for the first time that my lawn has disappeared. In its place have sprouted alliums, heucheras, ornamental grasses, herbs and bulbs."

## Visit Historic Lewes Delaware's Colonial Herb Garden at the Fisher-Martin House

Renovations of the herb garden have been completed by Lewes in Bloom member and Master Gardener



Brenda Brady who conducted research on what plants were used in a colonial herb garden. The plants are segregated by type such as medicinal, culinary, fragrant and flowering herbs and herbs for other household uses such as dyeing fabrics. Herbs used by Native Americans who populated the Cape Henlopen area during the 1700s are also in the garden. The photo above shows Lewes in Bloom volunteers preparing the garden for Lewes Garden Day.

View a brochure of the [garden's design at Lewesinbloom.org](http://www.lewesinbloom.org).

The Herb Garden is located next to the [Lewes Chamber of Commerce](#) at 120 Kings Highway, Lewes, DE 19958

# Upcoming Events

**Summer/Fall 2011—Mt. Cuba Center** *Your pathway to native plants*

**May 19—July 28** Take a two-hour guided tour—\$5 per person

**July 20—September 14—Wednesdays, Great Native Plants for the Perennial Border**  
10: am—Noon Sign up for each session separately

[Visit the website for more details and to register.](#)

**Summer 2011—Adkins Arboretum**

Register for classes [adkinsarboretum.org](http://adkinsarboretum.org).

**Fall 2011—[Delaware Nature Society](#)**

**October 1 & 2: Harvest Moon Festival, Saturday and Sunday, 10 am - 5 pm.** [Click for more information](#)

**October 1 & 2: Farm to Fork, Saturday and Sunday, 1:30 - 4:30 pm.** [Click for more information](#)

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## ***Save the Date***

### **Delaware Coast Day**

Sunday, October 2, 2011 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
College of Earth, Ocean and Environment  
Lewes, DE

Includes many exhibits related to Native Plants and their environment [www.decoastday.org](http://www.decoastday.org)

**DNPS meetings for 2011**—As part of our organizational restructuring, and as of 1 January 2011, we will no longer be having bi-monthly meetings. The annual native plant sale is still going to be held on the same date (the first Saturday of each November). We are still working on this and if anyone is interested in helping us to plan these workshops and symposiums, we could really use the help.

# Membership Application

## DELAWARE NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

### Member Information

Name:

Business Name or Organization:

Address:

City and Zip Code:

Telephone (home/work):

E-mail address:

- Full-time Student \$10.00
- Individual \$15.00
- Family or Household \$18.00
- Contributing \$50.00
- Business \$100.00
- Lifetime \$500.00
- Donations are also welcome \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Membership benefits include:

- \* The DNPS quarterly newsletter, The Turk's Cap
- \* Native plant gardening and landscaping information
- \* Speakers, field trips, native plant nursery and sales

**Total Amount Enclosed: \$**

**Make check payable to:  
DE Native Plant Society  
P.O. Box 369, Dover, DE 19903**

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**DELAWARE NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY  
P.O. BOX 369  
DOVER, DELAWARE 19903**

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