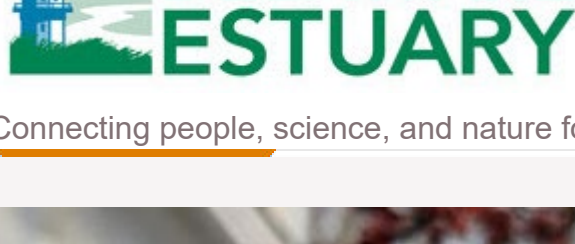
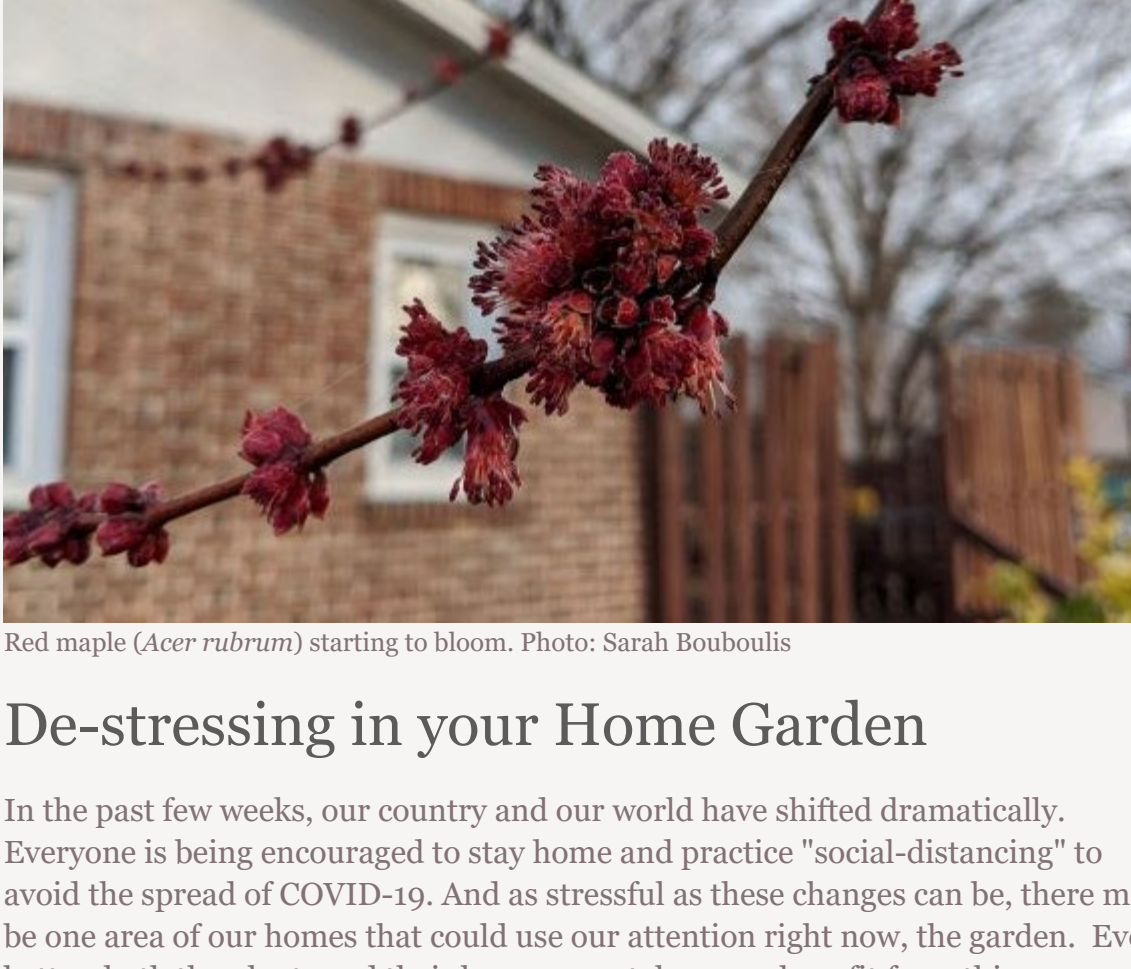


Perennial Pages

Gardens for Clean Water: A Seasonal Newsletter for Habitat Owners & Caretakers



Connecting people, science, and nature for a healthy Delaware River and Bay



Red maple (*Acer rubrum*) starting to bloom. Photo: Sarah Bouboulis

De-stressing in your Home Garden

In the past few weeks, our country and our world have shifted dramatically. Everyone is being encouraged to stay home and practice "social-distancing" to avoid the spread of COVID-19. And as stressful as these changes can be, there may be one area of our homes that could use our attention right now, the garden. Even better, both the plants and their human caretakers can benefit from this interaction.

Gardening is frequently listed as an activity to do when you're stuck at home, and spring is a time when our gardens need the most attention. So use your hours wisely and your garden may be the best it has been in years. Gardening can also be a great stress relieving activity by focusing on something specific rather than what's going on around us, all while still staying at home. April is a great time to get started on these activities and you can read about what needs to be done in our "Time for Action" section. Taking care of your plants may seem trivial as this time, but it may also be one of the best ways to get through a trying time.

If you have any gardening questions, please shoot me an email [here](#). And above all, stay healthy and keep gardening!



Community members planting a tree at Bellevue State Park. Photo: Shaun Bailey, PDE

Time for Action: Spring 2020

With early spring temperatures, plants and weeds (a.k.a. unwanted plants), may pop up a little earlier than usual! This means you need to be out earlier to weed!

Many early season "weeds" are small, but if left to go to flower, you could see a lot more of them in the future. Also, the earlier and the more often you weed, the less of a chore it becomes.

You may be eager to get out and clean-up because you didn't last fall (see the [fall 2019 issue](#) for reasons why!). April is a great time to do this task. It is ideal to wait until daytime temperatures are consistently above 50°F. Read more about reasons to wait [here](#).

Using last fall's leaves can be a good mulching strategy at this time. Let your emerging plants get some sun, but keep the leaves around your plants for continued insulation and moisture control. You also won't disturb as many critters that may still be overwintering.

You may want to wait to use traditional mulch until the soil dries out a little, this will give more time for ground dwelling insects to emerge.

If you have a rain garden, check on the in- and out-flows to make sure nothing is blocked and that water can enter and exit the system effectively. When spring comes, we usually see more rain so you want to make sure your garden is functioning properly.

Finally, and the most exciting, is adding new plants to your garden! We did a round-up of local plant sales in last spring's issue of Perennial Pages, and most of the information is still up to date, so you can [check it out here](#). You may need to search the organization's website for 2020 plant sale information and for any information about cancellations (unfortunately, there are many). However, many sales don't take place until May and might still be happening. Also, look out for local sellers who are offering curbside pick-up or plant delivery.

Get ready, and get out there!



American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), Photo: LeeAnn Haaf

Trees for Climate Change

How trees and other plants respond to climate change can be a concern for scientists and gardeners. Ecological gardeners want to ensure the long term success of their plants, while scientists want to help manage changing populations. Recently, a new report gave us some insight into this evolving topic.

There are scientific models from the U.S. Forest Service that were compiled by the Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science to project how various tree species will adapt with changes in climate.

This information can be useful for property owners so that they can best care for the trees already on their property and make smarter choices regarding which trees to plant in the future.

These models take into account many characteristics of trees (but not all) and predicts if tree populations throughout the mid-Atlantic (and other areas) will increase, decrease, or have no change over time, given different climatic predictions. For example, if a tree is prone to insect pests that do well in warm climates, that's a "negative" trait for future population predictions.

You can see the entire list at the link below, but summarized here are some findings regarding frequently used "yard trees."

The following tree populations are predicted to increase, making them a good choice for planting for long-term success:

- American sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*)
- Blackgum (*Nyssa sylvatica*)
- White Oak (*Quercus alba*)
- Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*)
- Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*)

The following tree populations are predicted to decrease, making them a poor choice for planting, and if already planted, important trees to monitor for signs of stress:

- American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*)
- Eastern White Pine (*Pinus strobus*)
- Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*)

These species showed inconclusive or mixed results:

- Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)
- Chestnut Oak (*Quercus montana*)
- White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*)
- Silver Maple (*Acer saccharinum*)
- Tulip Tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)

We can never fully know what the future holds, but we can use the data we have to make the best educated decisions. You can read more about the study and the model [here](#).

What's "up"?

Seasonal Plant Identification



Blueflag iris (*Iris versicolor*) (Photo: Sarah Bouboulis)

Blueflag iris (*Iris versicolor*), is a unique and beautiful flowering perennial, and the iris family is one most people are familiar with in our home gardens. However, *Iris versicolor* is one of a few native irises in our region. Bearded irises, often planted in gardens, are not native. This iris loves wet environments and can do great in a rain garden. It can also take complete submergence. It does not get very tall (~3ft) and it has a robust, but "well-ferocious" rhizomatic growth pattern.

[Read More](#)

Space Invaders

Invasive Species Spotlight



Hairy Bittercress (*Cardamine hirsuta*) (Photo: Sarah Bouboulis)

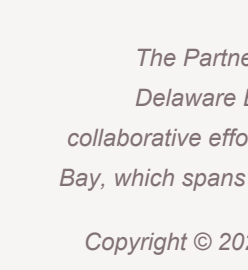
Hairy bittercress is an early season invader of many cultivated gardens, urban sidewalks, and wild spaces. It is generally unassuming and doesn't get very large, but it has good seed dispersal and can take over a space one small area at a time. It is generally easy to spot because it is one of the first green plants to pop up in early spring. So if you get out there early for spring weeding, you will be sure to take care of any hairy bittercress problems. Be sure in your ID, and you can add hairy bittercress to your salads.

[Read More](#)

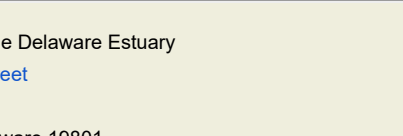
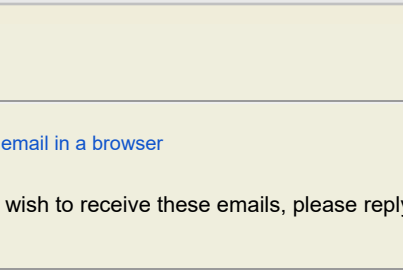
PDE News

Check out PDE's [Estuary News](#) for our Digging Deeper column, where we answer YOUR ecological gardening questions! If you have a question you'd like answered, email Sarah at sbouboulis@delawareestuary.org

Partner



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The Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, host of the Delaware Estuary Program, leads science-based and collaborative efforts to improve the tidal Delaware River and Bay, which spans Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

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