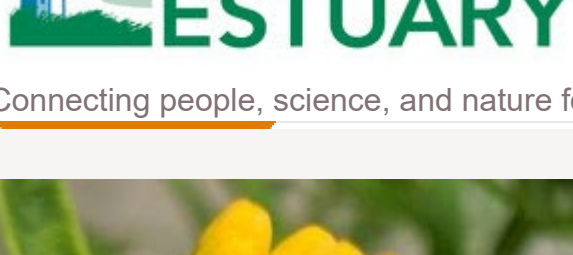


Perennial Pages

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



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



Asclepias tuberosa 'Hello Yellow' with green bottle fly. Photo: Sarah Bouboulis

Summer Fun

Summer is the season when your habitats are at full production. New flowers seem to be blooming every day! It's also a time when new habitats might need the most attention.

In this issue of *Perennial Pages* we have some tips for keeping your habitat in top summer shape. We'll also dig deeper by asking "what is a weed?" along with our usual "What's up?" and "Space Invaders" features.

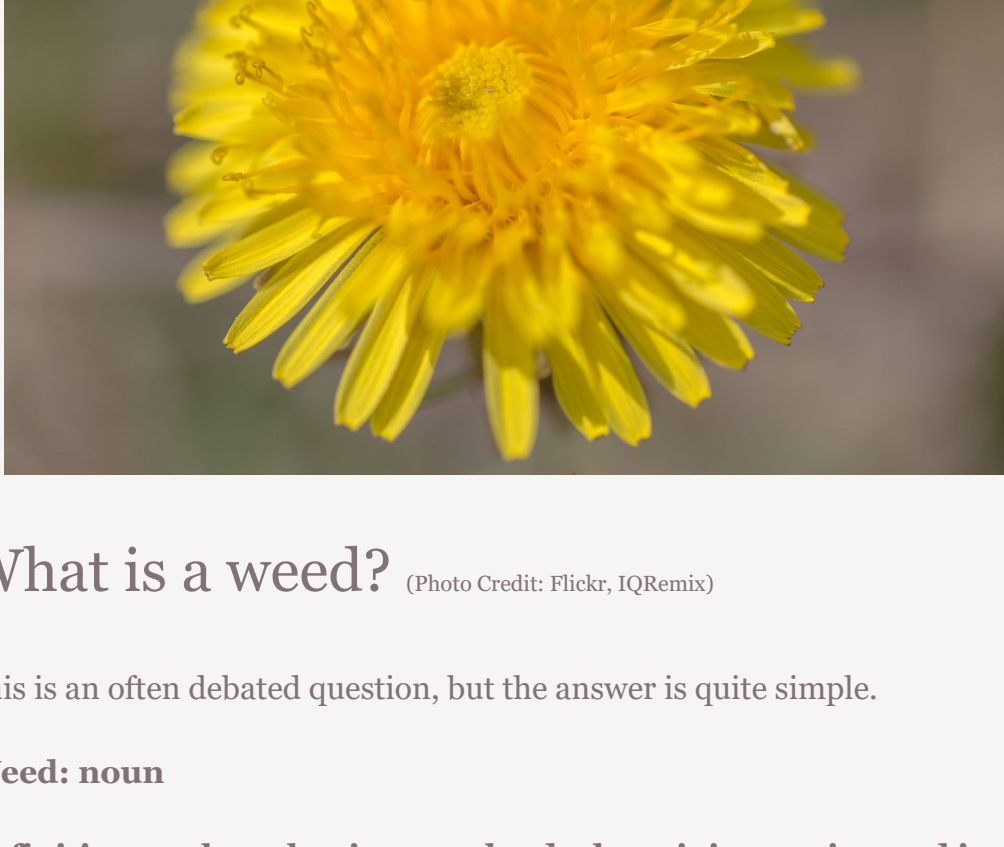


Atlantic City Electric employees after maintaining their pond buffer. Photo: Sarah Bouboulis

Time for Action: Summer Sun

Habitats, especially new ones, will need some attention during the summer months. But it can get hot out there! So remember to take breaks, stay hydrated, and do your work in the morning or evening to get the most out of your time in the garden. Below are some tips for keeping up with your habitat's needs:

- Weeding.** At this point in the year, most of your perennial plants should be nearing maturity and may begin to block the sun from reaching the ground, which in turn prevents unwanted plants from growing. Which is great! You'll want to look for and make note of bare spots and other areas where weeds are taking over and then prioritize those for next year's plantings. And, of course, keep pulling anything unwanted.
- Watering.** New habitats (anything less than three years old) will need watering during the summer when it doesn't rain. If two or three days go by without rain, give your plants a drink! This is especially true for rain gardens. Even mature rain gardens may need watering during droughts. For the most part, your plants will tell you (i.e. they'll start to wilt) if they need some water.
- Assess** your garden for wildlife. Bees, caterpillars and birds might be common visitors. Monarch caterpillars love milkweed and black swallowtails love members of the carrot family (golden alexanders and other herbs). As long as they're not decimating your plants, be happy for the wildlife you are supporting. Many plants can withstand more damage than you think, but if it looks like insects are decimating your plants, consider planting a few more (to bolster the population) or think about moving the plant to a different location, and planting something else instead.
- Enjoy** your habitat! Observe and take note of the flowers that are blooming and creatures you are helping to support.



What is a weed? (Photo Credit: Flickr, IQRemix)

This is an often debated question, but the answer is quite simple.

Weed: noun

Definition: a plant that is not valued where it is growing and is usually of vigorous growth, especially: one that tends to overgrow or choke out more desirable plants.

Simple! And it all comes down to what YOU, the habitat caretaker, values in your space. So here are some tips for figuring out what you consider to be a weed in your garden

1. Create a sketch of your garden and label what plants you planted where. Knowing this gives you a better idea of where unwanted plants might show up. You can use pen and paper, or get technical and use Microsoft PowerPoint, Adobe Illustrator or another application for more elaborate designs.

2. Label the plants in your garden (keep original labels, or make some out of popsicle sticks), this will help tremendously when perennials begin to reemerge again in the spring.

3. Learn to identify the plants in your garden, and start with the ones you planted. This will give you a heads up on identifying the ones that don't belong.

Identifying the plants you planted could be the most challenging part in deciding what stays and what goes. Here are some great resources to help you figure it out!

Websites:

- [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#)
- [North Creek Nurseries Plant Search](#)
- [Missouri Botanical Garden](#)

Books:

- [Newcomb's Wildflower Guide](#)
- [Weeds of North America](#)
- [Eradicate Invasive Plants](#)

Phone Apps: The accuracy of these apps is variable, but they can give you a good place to start. You can find these wherever you download your apps (most are free).

- [Plant Snap](#)
- [PlantNet](#)
- [Picture This](#)
- [iNaturalist](#) (This app initially offers a "auto" identification, but it is then confirmed by an actual person. More reliable, but can take some time)

Facebook groups: Post your questions or photos here for quick and accurate identifications by actual people

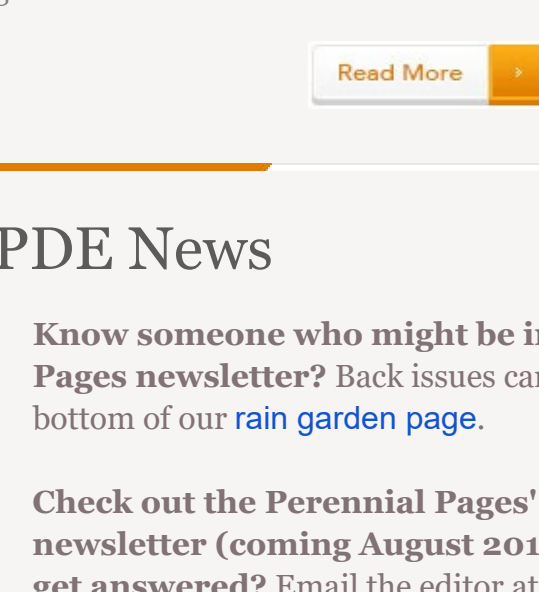
- [Pennsylvania Native Plant Society](#)
- [Delaware Native Plant Identification and Exchange](#)
- [Plant Identification and Discussion](#)
- [Plant Identification \(ID Only\)](#)
- [Tree Identification](#)

Don't be afraid to investigate new "volunteers" in your garden. You may be surprised by what native and lovely new plants may show up even though you didn't plant them.

Some of the hardest plants to identify can be newly emerging plants (they can all look the same!). Here at PDE we are working hard to create a guide to new growth for both "weeds" and your typical habitat plants. Stay tuned for the release!

What's "up"?

Seasonal Plant Identification



Asclepias tuberosa. Photo: Nick Myers

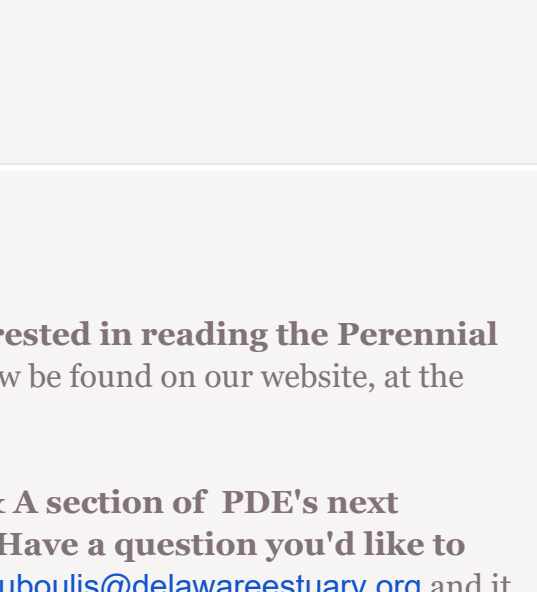
There are so many choices for a summer feature. We decided to pick a grouping of plants; the milkweed genus, *Asclepias*. Did you know the Delaware Estuary supports

approximately 8-9 native species of milkweed? Although many milkweed species are very rare, they all support the caterpillars of the monarch butterfly (and their population has been declining over the last few decades). There are several common species of milkweed that are great for a pollinator or rain garden habitat. *A. incarnata* (swamp milkweed), *A. syriaca* (common milkweed), *A. tuberosa* (butterfly milkweed) & *A. verticillata* (whorled milkweed) are all great choices.

[Read More](#)

Space Invaders

Invasive Species Spotlight



Lonicera japonica. Photo: Sarah Bouboulis

An invader most people are familiar with is Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*). It has interesting flowers, that smell great, but it can easily take over your garden in just one season! It is a vine that covers up and suffocates other vegetation. Using more controllable native vines (like *Lonicera sempervirens*, coral honeysuckle) along fences and other places, where Japanese Honeysuckle could thrive, can be an important tool into preventing a take over!

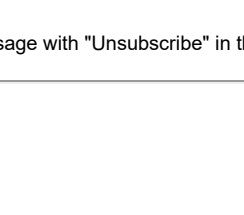
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PDE News

Know someone who might be interested in reading the Perennial Pages newsletter? Back issues can now be found on our website, at the bottom of our [rain garden page](#).

Check out the Perennial Pages' Q & A section of PDE's next newsletter (coming August 2019). Have a question you'd like to get answered? Email the editor at sbouboulis@delawareestuary.org and it might get featured!

Partner



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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