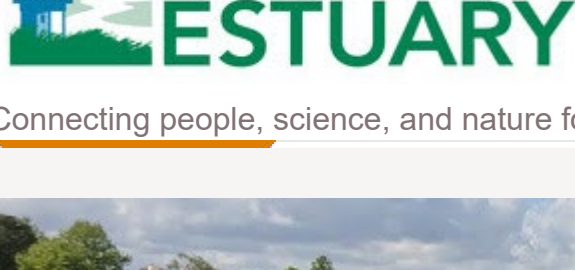


Perennial Pages

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



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



Students and teachers after planting a rain garden in Dover, DE in 2017 (Photo: Delaware Children in Nature)

It's Not Just About the Plants

It starts with the plants, a tangible item you can hold in your hands. But then you plant it, and the insects and creatures start to use the plant for food and shelter. Then your plants become part of a community, and maybe you think of all the work that community is doing; filtering water, preventing soil erosion, cycling and storing carbon, food production...so much work!

But why are those things important to think about?

Because, it's not just about the plants, it's about the people!

Every plant we put in the ground adds to the function of the ecosystem, and those functions are what's important to every creature, including us!

In this issue of Perennial Pages we have our regular features, including a look at the "good" and "bad" sides of our nation's official flower, the rose! In our special feature, we showcase Cecelia Rich, the founder of [Village Tree Inc.](#) an organization that is taking plants and truly connecting them to the people they benefit!



Tradescantia virginiana (Virginia spiderwort) being visited by a Syrphid fly. (Photo: Sarah Bouboulis)

Time for Action: Summer 2020

There is a common saying with perennial plants, "the first year they sleep, the second year they creep, and the third year they leap." This is so very true! That's why we say it takes at least three years for a native plant garden to really "take care of itself" and why those first three years of maintenance are so crucial! Those early years really make a difference for your plantings.

Most native plants shouldn't need watering, they are made for the hot and dry summers of our region. However, if things are looking wilted in newly planted beds, you can either supplement with water or consider moving the plant to a different location. It is possible that the plant was not made for that location and would do better elsewhere.

For an established garden, summer can be a low maintenance time of year--things are growing and blooming and look great! But for a newly established garden, you may have to work extra hard weeding out unwanted plants.

If you have a rain garden that is drying out during the summer, you may want to water it. Despite their many benefits, rain gardens are not exactly "natural" systems. In their natural environments, some rain garden plants would not typically experience the kind of drought they do in a designed rain garden, so watering for their survival may be necessary.



Village Tree founder, Cecelia Rich, with her blueberry, serviceberry, and American black currant bushes from PDE (Photo: Sarah Bouboulis)

Village Tree Inc., an Urban Farm Project

The Village Tree Inc. was established in 2012 by Cecelia Rich in Richmond, Virginia with the motto "It takes a village to raise a village." Cecelia saw a problem in her community and wanted to help. In the underserved communities, she saw that people were struggling with mental, physical and spiritual issues. Yet, the core issue was food insecurity, and hungry people often have trouble focusing on other important areas of their lives.

Fast forward a few years, and Cecelia is now operating Village Tree out of a Wilmington, Delaware West End neighborhood where the central meeting place for the community is an urban garden installed by Village Tree. The garden itself had its first growing season in 2019, and produced over 300 pounds of produce for over 150 families. Recently, PDE helped the Village Tree plant native blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*), serviceberry (*Amelanchier laevis*), and American black currant (*Ribes americanum*) in the garden, and is planning to help install rain barrels this summer. But it's not really about the plants or the produce.

Through the urban garden and, along with her various partners, Cecelia is able to make connections to the community. She is able to spread information about social and health services, register people to vote and empower residents to be a part of the solution. She's learned that one of the best ways to reach someone is at the dinner table.

Cecelia says the garden itself was just a first signal to the community that someone was there and that someone cared. There was someone who was willing to put in the work to improve the community. The garden is now the hub for Village Tree's community events.

Cecelia and Village Tree volunteers are always busy. They just planted the garden for 2020 and have several events coming up. The last Saturday of every month they are hosting "Pop-up Chef Tables" where local chefs will make meals for the disabled, elderly and veterans in the community. In July, the mobile food pantry will come to the neighborhood. She also hopes to add a greenhouse and composting operation to the garden space.

The Village Tree needs volunteers for these events (and others), as well as donations to keep doing their great work. You can donate or learn more about The Village Tree on their website or email Cecelia directly.

Cecelia knows more than anyone, it's not just about the plants!

What's "up"?

Seasonal Plant Identification



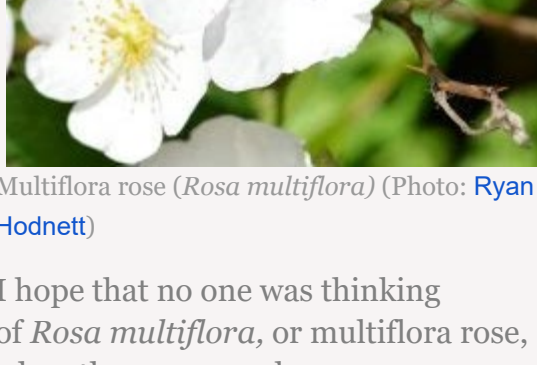
Virginia rose (*Rosa virginiana*) (Photo: Sandra Richard)

Did you know, the rose is the national flower of the United States? But which one? There are many roses! Perhaps they were referring to *Rosa virginiana*, (Virginia rose). This rose produces gorgeous pink flowers and can do well in a variety of habitats. The foliage is beautiful as well, with great fall color. This rose prefers full sun, well-drained soils, and neutral to acidic soils. Bees also love it, and even the rose hip fruits are edible. It is also known for being attractive to beneficial insects, which can keep other pest insects at bay. This shrub can spread rapidly, so make sure it has room to grow.

[Read More](#)

Space Invaders

Invasive Species Spotlight



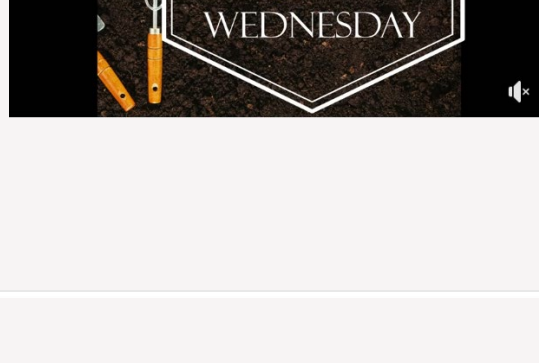
Multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*) (Photo: Ryan Hodnett)

I hope that no one was thinking of *Rosa multiflora*, or multiflora rose, when the rose was chosen as our national flower. It is a vining rose native to far East Asia, likely brought over as natural fencing or for gardens. It has white flowers that will catch your eye, however, it has escaped cultivation and created a menace in our natural woodlands. It spreads quickly via seeds and vegetation propagation, and has virtually no herbivores to keep it in check. The only good news is that they are generally easy to pull up. Best to wear rose gloves, as they do have many thorns. Continued mowing of the affected area for a season or two (or more) is also a good way to keep seeds from regrowing after removal.

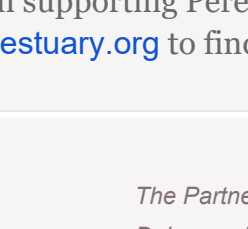
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PDE News

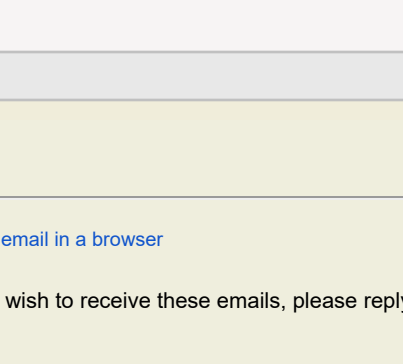
Want more native plant food for thought? Check our new web series "Wonderful Plant Wednesday." The show goes live on Wednesday, but can be viewed anytime after on our Facebook page or Instagram TV. Every week we highlight another native plant you can plant in your garden!



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Are you interested in supporting Perennial Pages? Contact sbouboulis@delawareestuary.org to find out how you can help!



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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