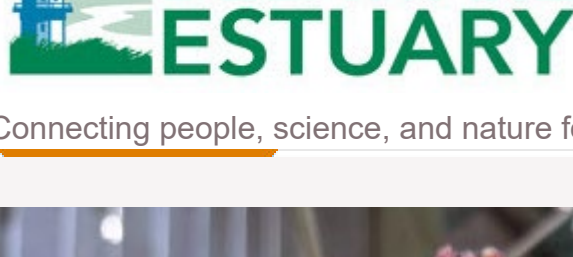


Perennial Pages

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



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



Eastern columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) flower blooming in mid spring, Newark, Delaware. (Photo: Sarah Bouboulis)

Spring is here!

Spring is often the favorite season of gardeners; lower temperatures, fewer biting insects than summer, and all your favorite flowers are making their first appearances. It can also be a game of "did I plant that?" which can be both fun and confusing, but sure makes things interesting. For garden care tasks, if you get out there early, sometimes you can avoid headaches come summer. In this issue, we focus on ways to keep on top of spring maintenance items, and we also feature a way you can contribute to science while you are out in your garden. Win-win. Happy gardening!



Spring beauty (*Claytonia virginica*), a springtime ephemeral, peeking out among the green ground groundcover in Newark, Delaware. (Photo: Sarah Bouboulis)

Time for Action: Spring 2022

Sometimes spring gardening tasks can seem daunting. But a little effort each day can go a long way. It is, hopefully, also one of the most enjoyable times to be out in the garden. Hunting for new plant growth and finding your favorites returning for another season is always exciting. Here are some reminders for important maintenance tasks that are best to do in spring.

- **Clean-up.** By the time you are reading this, temperatures should be more than warm enough to start cutting back any sticks from last year and removing or moving leaves from beds. You want to wait as long as you can to ensure all wintering insects have emerged for the year. And if you can, it may be best to leave at least 6-18" of hollow stems for up to two years. [Learn more here.](#)
- **Monitor beds** closely for weeds. It's better to get invasives out of the way early, when they are small, rather than waiting until they start to take over.
- **Go plant shopping.** Think about what was missing last year and what you would like to add. See previous [spring issues of Perennial Pages](#) for information on local yearly plant sales.
- **Re-mulch** areas as needed and water any new plantings throughout the spring/summer.



Poster for USGS bumble bee survey. ([USGS](#), [Native Bee Lab](#))

Help the Bees with Citizen Science

The [USGS Native Bee Lab](#) is looking for volunteers to look for bumble bees in their yard and other landscapes. Although the project does have some "target" regions, anyone is encouraged to participate. The goal is to see what plant species bumble bees prefer and to learn more about what actions could be taken to support their populations as a whole.

In short, citizen scientists take a 30 minute walk around an area, note which plants are blooming (including weeds and invasives) and count all the bees they see. They also will note which flowers the bees are feeding on, and take pictures of the bees/flowers along the way. Volunteers can repeat these walks as often as they'd like, or walk in a new area.

If you already take walks around your garden, or a local park or roadside, this is a great way to help researchers learn more about what's happening in your area.

To learn more about the project or sign-up to participate, email Jenan El-Hifnawi at bumblebeecount@gmail.com.

What's "up"?

Seasonal Plant Identification



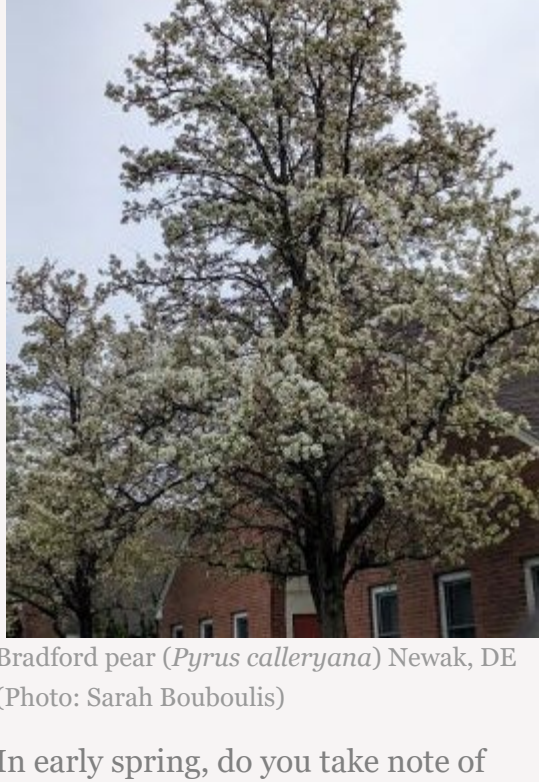
Woodland Phlox 'Blue Moon' (*Phlox divaricata*) blooming in early spring, Newark, Delaware. (Photo: Sarah Bouboulis)

Woodland Phlox (*Phlox divaricata*) is a lovely spring native! It blooms in early April and the flowers last for nearly a month, adding some much needed color to our mostly green (and maybe still brown) gardens. Its native habitat is fairly wooded, so making sure it has some late summer cover/shade will keep it happy all year long. Woodland Phlox is low growing, and in mild winters it can be nearly evergreen, making a nice groundcover. In spring, the flowers shoot up from the basal foliage in bright purple displays. It can handle various soil types, but prefers moist or average. Butterflies and moths are often attracted to these early blooms, and the flowers are quite fragrant. Woodland phlox can sometimes be confused with the non-native, [sweet William](#) (*Dianthus barbatus*), but sweet William usually blooms later in the season, can have fringed petals, and grows slightly taller. Woodland phlox is a spring favorite for sure!

[Read More](#)

Space Invaders

Invasive Species Spotlight



Bradford pear (*Pyrus calleryana*) Newark, DE. (Photo: Sarah Bouboulis)

In early spring, do you take note of those lovely white blooming trees? Although they can be beautiful, they are most likely the invasive Bradford or Callery Pear (*Pyrus calleryana*), introduced from Asia. Planted heavily as landscape trees in urban & suburban areas, their seed is easily spread into natural areas and can become one of the dominant tree types. It also reverts to a more "wild type" tree when it spreads, forming dense thickets with thorns. They are also generally weak wooded and the flowers do not smell good. Although they are related to fruiting pear trees, they do not produce edible fruit for humans and are merely ornamental. But birds do like the fruit, and contribute to their spread. Additionally, Pennsylvania and Delaware now have laws that prohibit the sale of this tree. So, cut down those pear trees! Good replacements include [Eastern red bud](#) (*Cercis canadensis*) and [serviceberry](#) (*Amelanchier canadensis*).

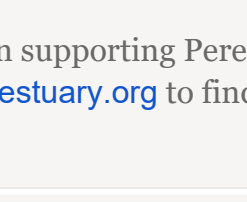
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PDE News

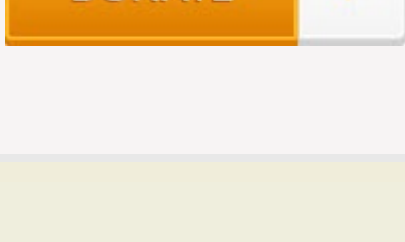
PDE's City of Wilmington Earth Day Celebration is back, and in person! Come check out the festivities on Market Street in downtown Wilmington on Saturday, April 23rd. [More information can be found here.](#) There will be native plant giveaways.

Feel free to send any of your gardening questions or topic ideas to Perennial Pages editor, Sarah Bouboulis; sbouboulis@delawareestuary.org

Partner



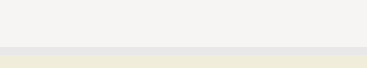
Are you interested in supporting Perennial Pages? Contact sbouboulis@delawareestuary.org to find out how you can help!



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