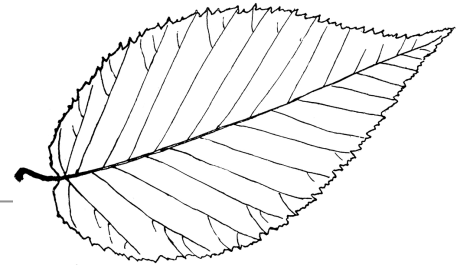


LEAF



Living on the Edge of Arden Forests

Midwinter

Imbolc, Candlemas, Brigid, Groundhog's Day... Whatever you want to call it, it is an in-between time when we hunker down in the cold and dream of spring days to come. The word Imbolc means "in the belly" in the old Irish Neolithic language and refers to the pregnancy of sheep and goats. *Candlemas* is the old Christian holiday whereby people brought their candles to church to be blessed for use the rest of the year. *Brigid* refers to the festival of the Celtic fire Goddess. And we all know about Groundhog's Day. In my Pennsylvania hometown, they celebrate early February with a Fire and Ice festival—ice sculptures and a chili contest. So what does this time of year mean for the ecology and care of our forests? Plenty. Now is the time when English ivy is green when little else is, and we can see it and pull it with relish—a great way to get out of the house and expend some of our pent-up energies. These days, too, our mailboxes, physical and electronic, are laden with seed catalogs and gardening advertisements. Since this is the time we peruse the catalog pages and plan our gardens, it is also the chance to bring mindfulness to our gardening endeavors. What is the purpose of our gardens? Do we want them to be purely decorative or do we want to take a leap and add in some of the heavy hitters that support our local wildlife? It doesn't have to be an either/or situation—the heavy hitters can be decorative as well. We hope you find plenty of inspiration in these few pages to turn this period of quiet winter introspection into plans for action...starting with a fun bit. The Arden Forest Committee is sponsoring an ivy pulling initiative this winter. Join any Forest Committee work party or Ardentown Ivy pull with Elaine Schmerling or you can create your own team or work independently. For more information on the Forest Committee work parties contact Bev Clendening beverlyclendening@gmail.com. You can leave ivy in piles in the woods or save it to enter various ivy-pulling contests at the Ivy Festival on April 2. [See Box at right for prize categories.]

-Jill Althouse-Wood

**All events mentioned in LEAF are open to public, not just Ardens residents*

The Ivy Festival on **April 2** will feature contests for the following prize categories:

Biggest Ivy Ball—Start pulling ivy now and continue through March. Roll the ivy into a big ball and bring it (or photo with measurement) to the Ivy Festival. If you start pulling now, the ivy will be dead—this is a good thing.

Longest Continuous String of Ivy—Take your long string of ivy to Keri del Tufo at 1704 Green Lane for measurement.

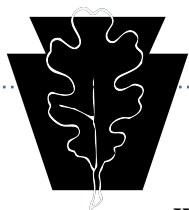
Best Ivy Creation—Create a sculpture from the ivy you pull

Fattest Ivy Vine—Cut ivy at its base and bring a section to the ivy festival for measurement. The largest circumference can be found at the base of the tree.

**Please keep track of your volunteer hours. The Forest Committee tracks these for grants.*

***Wear gloves. Though Poison Ivy is dormant this time of year, some people have reported winter cases.*

***** More details forthcoming. Please check in often on Forests of the Ardens Facebook page.**



Keystone Plants

In the fall, I attended a network Zoom call for communities who are either working toward Community Wildlife Certification or those, like The Ardens, who already have their certification. Our speaker for this national call was Dr. Doug Tallamy. Though he has national audience, he is local, teaching entomology the University of Delaware. Readers of this newsletter will recognize the name from books we have recommended. And, too, Tallamy spoke at The Arden Gild Hall back in April of 2019 to a packed house. At the time, he was extolling the virtues of native plants while encouraging us all to convert lawn to plantings that support native wildlife and ecology.

On the recent Zoom call, Tallamy went a step further to encourage the use of what he calls “keystone plants.” Native plants are great, but some play more of a singular role, providing limited aid to only one or a very few species in our ecosystem. Tallamy and his team have identified 14% of plants among our natives which are essential to the lifecycle of a whole lot of species. These are the powerhouses that are foundational to our local forests and ecosystems. This winter, when you are planning your gardens, be sure to include some of these ecological heavy lifters. Better yet, swap them in for some of your non-native plants. And be sure to ask for them at local gardening centers. For a detailed list of Keystone plants of our region (Ecoregion 8: Eastern Temperate Forests) visit <https://www.nwf.org/-/media/Documents/PDFs/Garden-for-Wildlife/Keystone-Plants/NWF-GFW-keystone-plant-list-ecoregion-8-eastern-temperate-forests.ashx?la=en&hash=1E180E2E5F2B06EB9ADF28882353B3BC7B3B247D>

Getting Real with Realtors

Spring is a time when many people consider putting their houses on the market, and they get serious about making their homes and gardens presentable for buyers. Realtors often counsel sellers to work on the curb appeal of the property. But curb appeal is a changing aesthetic. Dr. Doug Tallamy is doing his part to educate real estate professionals. Manicured lawns and hedges are OUT. What’s IN? A minimal lawn as well as lots of native trees, shrubs, flowers and ground covers. Tallamy argues that native plants are just as beautiful as the nonnatives and don’t require copious amounts of water and chemical lawn treatments—not to mention all the carbon-emitting, power machinery like lawn mowers and leaf blowers. Plus native plants have the added advantage of attracting colorful butterflies and birds (nature’s adornment) into the garden. If you are planning to sell or buy a home this spring, have a conversation with your realtor about curb appeal. And if you are a real estate professional, use your influence to sway homeowners to make forward-thinking changes to their front gardens before they sell.



-Jill Althouse-Wood

Winter Sowing

“Winter sowing”, a phrase attributed to gardener Trudi Davidoff, is a method of starting seeds outdoors in winter. Limited on space, Davidoff started sowing seeds in potting soil in a few aluminum takeout containers with plastic lids. She set them outside in the winter weather. The plastic lids acted as greenhouses. With her success a new method was born. The concept took off—in part due to Davidoff’s website—and in 2006, the USDA recognized the viability of the technique by adding the term to the National Agricultural Library Thesaurus.

Why Winter Sowing? Starting plants from seed is a great way to save money and space. Invest in some seeds and potting mix, some tape and markers. Rescue some takeout containers, milk jugs or plastic liter soda bottles from your recycling bin, and begin. You can find many websites and tutorials online by searching *winter sowing*. Midwinter is the perfect time to start.

First and foremost, choose hardy seeds; seeds of tropical and tender plants will die in the cold. Good choices for your first attempts at winter sowing include:

Flowers: Alyssum, butterfly weed, calendula, coreopsis, cosmos, foxgloves, hollyhocks, petunia **Vegetables:** Beets, broccoli, cabbage, chard, carrots, kale, mache, radishes, spinach **Keystone Heavy Hitters :** Goldenrod, Lobelia (cardinal flower)

Help inspire others. Take photos of your efforts and post about your experience to Forests of the Ardens and/or Arden Club Gardeners Gild Facebook pages.

Plan ahead for **Annual Woods Clean-up** : The Annual Christina River Cleanup is taking place on April 2. For our part, we have scheduled the Ardens Woods Clean-up for the week of **April 2 through April 9**. We’ll be forming a network of neighbors to sweep sections of the paths and creeksides for garbage and report back with an estimate of the weight of the collected trash, which will allow us to report our totals to the Christina Watershed clean-up. Put trash in with your weekly pickup. If you pull out anything large out of the forest, let us know. We will arrange for large item pickups. Check-in with Facebook at **Forests of the Ardens** or contact Carol at **carol2339@verizon.net**, text to (215) 806-5131 to find out where you can contribute in the Arden Woods and Sherwood Forest. For Ardentown/Ardencroft residents, contact Elaine at elaineschmerling@gmail.com or text (302) 528-1735.

The Gardeners Gild will be cooking up a vegan feast on **April 9** for the Arden Dinner Gild. The menu will attempt to copy a sought-after falafel sandwich/platter from Las Du Falafel, a restaurant in the Marais in Paris—proof that vegan food can be scrumptious. You don’t have to be a vegan, but including more vegan meals into your weekly rotation is a way of moving toward more sustainable, earth-friendly practices. For more information on incorporating more vegan meals into your diet, check out [One Meal A Day for the planet website](#). To reserve a seat or takeout for the April 9 dinner, email adgregreservations@gmail.com. More details will be available on The Arden Dinner Gild Facebook page closer to the event.

The Ardens have renewed their Community Habitat certification through December 2022. For those who registered their leaseholds as habitats and have not received a Forest of the Ardens 2021 patch, please text Jill Althouse-Wood at 717-799-7286, and she will see that you get one.

Did you know?

A single little brown bat can eat up to 1,000 mosquito-sized insects in a single hour.



Bats are an effective way to cut down on mosquito populations. How can you attract bats to your garden?

- Don’t cut down that dead tree.
- Keep cats indoors.
- Don’t use pesticides. (Bats will do the job for you).
- Install a bat house

Bat houses can be installed at any time of the year, but they are more likely to be used during their first summer if installed before the bats return in spring.

For more tips on bat boxes (to build or buy?) and where hang them, check out the following website. <https://www.batcon.org/about-bats/bat-houses/>

Trending Topic: Assisted Migration

Climate change has everyone asking if we should be planting, not for our current plant hardiness zone (one website has the Ardens listed as 7a, while nearby Claymont listed as 7b) but for a higher zone in anticipation of rising temperatures in years to come. Trees and plants do migrate on their own, but as climate change projections set off alarms, it is now obvious that ecological systems are changing far more rapidly than our institutions, or even nature itself, can remediate. Recent studies show that mass extinction, too, is occurring at far faster rates than previously understood. Rapid urbanization and development continue to fragment the few natural areas that are left, rendering less than 2% of eastern North America sufficiently connected for species to be able to migrate in response to climate change.

To face these problems, an increasing number of ecologists and institutions, including the U.S. Forest Service, recommend *Assisted Migration* as one of the best means of proactively mitigating mass extinctions - particularly of native trees. *Assisted Migration* is the act of expanding the range of native species and communities northward faster than they could migrate naturally in response to climate change. Any gardener can become a guardian for species endangered by climate change and habitat loss.

While many experts agree that *Assisted Migration* offers hope, Dr. Doug Tallamy of the University of Delaware (yes, him again) disagrees. He says that climate change isn't just warmer temperatures, but also the rise in extreme weather events, which means that tender plants transplanted from milder climates will still have to contend with freak winter storms, cold blasts, swings in precipitation, etc. And that it will do no good to plant trees that will only die when exposed to such extreme conditions.

What is the answer when experts disagree? Take the time to research the topic for yourself. Ask experts when you encounter them. Stay abreast of the issue by reading studies and articles as they come out. Share and discuss on public forums. This is another reason we encourage everyone to join our Forests of the Ardens Facebook Page—so that we can discuss what works in our area, based on input from our neighbors.

-Jill Althouse-Wood

LEAF is brought to you by the Arden Forest Committee (in cooperation with our sister villages of Ardentown and Ardencroft, and the Arden Club Gardeners Guild). The Arden Forest Committee implements the Forest Stewardship Policy, the main tenets being preservation of a natural ecosystem, including appropriate wildlife habitat, and enhancing residents' interaction with and enjoyment of this natural environment. Specifically, the Forest Committee oversees trail improvements to encourage residents to enjoy the woods. We use social media to dialog with neighbors about ways to appreciate, respect, and care for our forests. In addition, we monitor hazard trees, evaluate risk, and intervene if damage to structures or hikers would occur if the tree fell. The forest committee is charged with the tasks of monitoring forest borders to stop encroachment by leaseholders or neighbors. We also observe water flow in an effort to prevent stream bank erosion and are currently monitoring our waters to ensure stream health. Lastly, we facilitate removal of invasive species to encourage native growth and diversity of native species.

UPCOMING GARDENERS GILD EVENTS

The Arden Club Gardeners Gild meets on the third Monday of the month at 7:30 PM in the Arden Gild Hall unless stated.

FEBRUARY meeting will feature a tree and shrub pruning workshop led by Elizabeth Varley. It will be a pre-recorded tutorial, and the entire meeting will be via Zoom.

MARCH meeting is still TBD, but plans include a tutorial on how to create a small bubbler water feature in our gardens and how and why to certify your gardens as a wildlife habitat.

Coming up in Spring, GG will have another native shrub and perennial sale with March ordering and April delivery. The sale will be sure to include keystone species.

Check Arden Club Gardeners Gild Facebook Page for more information.

Arden Forest Committee

Buzz Ware Village Center/ 2119 The Highway/ Wilmington, DE 19810

<http://arden.delaware.gov/committees/forest-committee/>

forest@arden.delaware.gov

Facebook group: Forests of the Ardens

Current elected members: Carol Larson (co-chair), Jill Althouse-Wood, David Jones, Bev Clendening (co-chair), Keri del Tufo

Current meeting time: 3rd Monday of the month, 5 PM at Buzz Ware Village Center, 2119 The Highway, Arden. Meetings are open to the public.

LEAF editor: Jill Althouse-Wood

The goals of this newsletter are forest stewardship, community, and communication—goals we want to advance through social media and online forums. Some issues of this newsletter will be only available in electronic form. Join Facebook Group *Forests of the Ardens* to stay connected, find out about future events, and read archives of LEAF (hard copies at Arden Library).