



# Something to Chew On

Contributed by Virginia Hallman

The March 6 issue of the New York Times garden section featured an article (see link below) on the ideas of Douglas Tallamy, Professor and Chair of the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware, which he set forth in his recent book, *Bringing Nature Home*. The article's byline read "As exotic ornamentals out-compete native plants, many creatures are starving to death because they did not evolve with the exotics." Intrigued, I read the article and subsequently bought the book. I wanted to share a bit of what I've learned with you who also love gardens and appreciate the birds, butterflies, and other wildlife that grace them.

We human beings have long loved to learn about, acquire, and plant new and

interesting species from other geographical locations, because they add beauty and diversity to our garden landscapes. Over time, this practice has accidentally resulted in notable overpopulations of various plants, such as Oriental bittersweet, and the introduction of new plant diseases and insects, like Dutch elm disease and Japanese beetles (all of which I know "up close and personal".) Because the natural inhibitors of these invaders were left behind, these flora and fauna flourish. Hugely successful populations of non-native plants overtake native plants and in doing so, starve the chain of animal life that fed upon the natives. This chain begins with insects and continues through birds and mammals. Non-accidental practices that result in cleared land and big lawns reduce the diversity of life around us much faster,

## May 1 Annual Meeting at Audrey's

Come celebrate May Day at the home of Audrey Dimitry, 9 Old Wharf Road, West Newbury as we hold our annual meeting. We will be electing a new Recording Secretary (**Pollyann Statom** is turning in her pen after 5 years of unflagging, hard-working service) and one new Director. The nominees are **Jane Jeffers** for Secretary, and **Priscilla Styer** for Director.

Please bring a salad, main dish or dessert to share, and help us welcome Spring!

Hospitality will be provided by chairs **Audrey and Pat Finley** ably assisted by Joan Tranfaglia, Barbara Berkenbush, and Jennifer Germain



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Some keep the Sabbath going to Church,  
I keep it staying at Home -  
With a bobolink for a Chorister,  
And an Orchard, for a Dome.

—Emily Dickinson

# Something to Chew On, cont.

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*(Continued from page 1)*

and relentlessly.

Nature is a fine-tuned, minutely balanced affair resulting from eons of adaptation. Plant and animal life cycles are diverse, specialized, and intertwined, each a little world unto itself with exacting needs for survival. One example: butterflies only lay their eggs on the plant species to which their larvae are adapted. Unfortunately, the alien butterfly bush (*Buddleja* species) does not support the reproduction of a single North American butterfly. Yes, adult butterflies are drawn to the plant's nectar but to have butterflies in the first place you need to also grow natives such as milkweeds (*Asclepias*), black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia* species), and Joe-Pye weed (*Eupatorium fistulosum*). Every caterpillar from such a garden area becomes either a new moth or butterfly, or dinner for something else, often a hungry bird.

At our February meeting, the SavATree folks explained methods of controlling common insect pests. One of these was sawflies, the only "wasp" that produces leaf-feeding caterpillars that are often found on conifers in our area. Now, some of these sawflies are native to New England but several species are not. Here's where Nature's complexity enters in. If your surroundings provide a sufficient balance of native plant/insect/bird/ diversity AND the sawfly caterpillars are a native species, OR if the nesting birds in your area eat that particular non-native caterpillar, THEN the balance of nature resolves the issue. All is well, and digestible sawfly caterpillars provide a tasty, protein-filled meal for baby birds. What to do? Observe, and de-

termine whether the sawfly caterpillar population you've discovered is a working member of the food chain in your yard before you automatically reach for a destructive solution, otherwise you risk destroying lives you value more, and which represent a strand of that amazing web of interdependence.

It's been observed that most gardeners don't notice an insect infestation until around 10% of the foliage has been damaged. This approximates the same percentage of damage that would occur naturally if we traded in insecticides for tolerance of insect herbivores and worked to provide biodiversity and balance within our gardens by steadily incorporating more native plants, bushes and trees in our garden designs and consistently battling our invasive plants.

A final point—for the purposes of biodiversity, "native" refers to a plant that has historical evolutionary relationships with the flora and fauna with which it interacts; they have "co-evolved". Although the Norway maple is the most common shade tree in North America, it has only been on this continent for a fraction of evolutionary time so it is considered to be an alien plant here. Shorter distances count too—the Blue Spruce is native to the Rocky Mountains; in New England it's an alien because it can't interrelate as a native.

You can read the NY Times article here: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/06/garden/06garden.html?ex=1205557200&en=a7da38291ef31e42&ei=5070&emc=eta1>

Club News

## Plantspeak, Anyone?

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"Soft and almond-y; nice nose." Or

"Earthy, with olive accents and a hint of plum; nice chewy tannins." Or yet

"Nice wrap-around berry flavor; responds well to cellaring."

Winespeak, right? The often bewildering language of experts struggling to write about wines and how they taste. Well, it won't be news to gardeners and readers of gardening catalogs that there is a Plantspeak too, yet another language intended to edify but often more than a little baffling.

Consider these excerpts from a current daylily catalog:

"A real attention grabber and fragrant, too. Nocturnal."

Or

"A fast grower and good all around doer. Also, very pretty."

Or "Makes a terrific clump." "Spectacular in a clump."

And "Fast to clump."

And, a personal favorite, "Fertile both ways."

I am not making these up!

Are they talking about plants or Garden Club members?

Fortunately, labeling your plants for the May 17<sup>th</sup> Sale is much easier: just name it, and give a color, height and spacing, et voila! you are done! Labels will be available at the May 1 meeting.

The Plant Sale is only 3 ½ weeks away, so Dig, Dig, Dig! It's been a late spring, but the past few warm days have everything jumping, so get your pots from Dot's, your spade from the glade, and CHARGE! Drop-off locations will be announced at Audrey's on the 1st.

# Events

## Newburyport Horticultural Society

Tues Nov 13 7pm (6:30: bus. mtg) \$5  
Newburyport Library, State Street  
Info: Floreen Maroncelli 978 463-9923

## Tower Hill Botanic Gardens

**Art in the Garden Series Exhibit #1**  
**May 13-Jun 22**

Arlene Fins Sculpture  
and

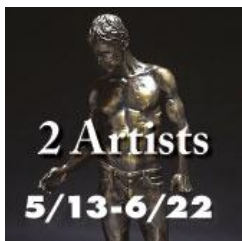
Dominick Marcigliano  
Photos

**Thursday, May 15**  
**Artist Reception .**  
**FREE**

with Dominick and Arlene

11 French Drive, Boylston MA

Info: 508 869-6111



## Museum of Fine Arts

**Art in Bloom April 26-29 Saturday**  
**through**  
**Tuesday:**  
**10:00 to 4:45**

Free with mu-  
seum admis-  
sion. 465  
Huntington  
Ave, Boston



## Beacon Hill Garden Club

**Hidden Gardens of Beacon Hill Tour**

**Thursday, May 15, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM** rain  
or shine. This is a self-guided tour, \$25 in  
advance, \$30 day of tour, Contact:

[www.beaconhillgardenclub.org](http://www.beaconhillgardenclub.org)

## Dracut Garden Club

**Sogetsu Ikebana, Japanese Flower Ar-  
ranging with Kaye Vosburgh June 11**

Contact Mary Ellen McCarthy 978 957-  
1289

## Clubs in the News

# Plant Sales & Garden Tours

## Georgetown Country Gardeners

**Annual Plant Sale Saturday, May 10,**  
**8:30—1:00pm** Corner of Park Street  
and East Main Street across from Town  
Parking Lot. Over 500 home grown per-  
ennials, shrubs, annuals, herbs, and  
hanging baskets.



## Village Garden Club of Andover

**Annual Plant Sale Saturday, May 31, 9:00 to 1:00** Home of Betsy Wil-  
liams, 155 Chestnut Street, Andover

## Methuen Garden Club

**Celebrating National Garden Week with Sex in the Garden—**Judy  
Brenner **Tuesday, June 3, 7:00 to 9:00 pm** Nevins Memorial Library,  
305 Broadway, Methuen. Doors open at 6:30 pm. \$7 donation, includes  
refreshments Wildflower arrangements, gift baskets and much more.

## Chelmsford Garden Club

**A Prelude to Summer House Tour Sunday June 8, 1:00 to 5:00 and**  
**Monday, June 9, 10:00 to 3:00** 5 Homes and 2 gardens, a Plant Silent  
Auction and Tea. Advance tickets: \$20, Day of Tour: \$25. Contact Bonni  
Asbornson, 978 692-8685

## Maudslay State Park is restoring their formal gardens

which have been in ruins for many years. They have received  
the cost of a new fountain from a single donor, and are seeking  
help from the garden clubs of the area to help with the cost of  
plumbing and bringing electricity to the site. If you would like to  
help, you can send a donation to MSPA Garden Committee,  
Curzon Mill Road, Newburyport, MA 01950



## Ask Peony **May**, cont. from p.4

leaving the top bud sticking out of the ground about 2". Pack loose soil  
around your cuttings.

That's it: you're done! If you have some rooting compound for hardwood cut-  
tings you can dip the cuttings in rooting compound before placing them in the  
trench, but you really don't need it. They'll root without it.

Water them as needed when it's dry, but don't keep them soaking wet.

Some grapes are typically grafted, but you can still try rooting them this way, it  
might work. Concord, Niagara and Catawba for sure can be rooted this way.



**WNGC**



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*Gardens for beauty,  
learning, and sharing*

*The West Newbury Garden Club was founded in 1936 to encourage and cultivate an interest in gardening, to aid in protecting and conserving our natural resources, to further the study of horticulture and flower arranging, and to promote civic beauty. For more information, please contact President Linda Schaeffer at 978 363-5251 or at linda-schaeffer@verizon.net*

**Next Board Meeting**

**May 8, 2008 at 7:00pm**



## Ask Peony **May**

Dear Peony,

*I am so worried about the climate, and the cost, I mean the effect, of flying wines all over the country. French wines have just zoomed out of sight, and with all this worrying, I need something (like wine) to calm my nerves. I am simply a wreck!*

*Crashed and Whining*

Dear Wreck,

Those French wines are just so yummy, aren't they? But don't despair, you can make your own wine! And boy, will it be locally grown! Try being more adventuresome in your garden, and, with some help from Mike McGroarty's monthly newsletter, your life is all about to change, oh yes.

How would you like to grow your very own grapevine? You know you would! Mike says that most grapes are really easy to propagate. The middle of the winter to spring is an ideal time to do it. Get outside and try something new. All this vining should bear fruit!

Yours,

Peony

Mike's directions:

Cut some vines from the parent plant. You can cut these vines as many feet long as desired.

Cut the vines into cuttings. Start at the thick end of the vine. (the bottom or butt end). Notice the bumps on the vine. Those are bud unions. On grapes they can be as far apart as 6 inches.

Make a cut right below, but *not into* a bud union. Then skip a bud union, and then make a cut right above the next bud union. The second cut can be as much as one inch above the top bud union. Each cutting should have three buds: top, bottom and middle.

Remove any side branches (curly cues) from your cutting.

Take your finished cuttings out to the garden, dig a trench about 8 inches deep and place your cuttings in the trench,

