



THE FIRST ANNUAL

NASHVILLE NATIVE PLANT SYMPOSIUM

**SATURDAY & SUNDAY | MARCH 22-23, 2025
WARNER PARK NATURE CENTER**

SYMPOSIUM SPONSORS



A special thank you to our generous sponsors, whose support made this inaugural symposium possible. Your commitment and dedication have helped bring this vision to life, fostering meaningful conversations and connections. We are deeply grateful for your partnership in making this event a reality!

HOST ORGANIZATIONS

CENTENNIAL PARK CONSERVANCY

DAVEY RESOURCE GROUP

FRIENDS OF WARNER PARKS

THE HABITAT CONNECTION

MASTER GARDENERS OF DAVIDSON COUNTY

METRO PARKS AND RECREATION

METRO WATER SERVICES

TENNESSEE ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

TENNESSEE NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

WARNER PARK NATURE CENTER

WEED WRANGLE

WILD ONES OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE

WONDER GIFT & GARDEN



PROGRAM SCHEDULE

SATURDAY, MARCH 22

REGISTRATION & REFRESHMENTS 8:30 AM

WELCOME 9:00 AM

PRESENTATIONS

OPENING KEYNOTE: "CULTIVATING
COMMUNITY 9:10 AM

JOANNA BRICHETTO

NATIVE GARDENS ARE FOR THE BIRDS:
WHY DO WE CARE ABOUT BIRDS & HOW
CAN NATIVE PLANTS SUPPORT BIRDS? 9:30 AM

LAURA COOK & JOY BOVEN

NATIVES NINE TO FIVE 10:30 AM

IVAN CHESTER

FROM IDEA TO VOLUNTEER GARDENER:
DIY NATIVE LANDSCAPING

DONNIE BRYAN

BLOOMING MINDS: CREATING
POLLINATOR GARDENS IN LOCAL
SCHOOLS, PARKS, AND LIBRARIES 11:30 AM

MONKIA G. PRETZ, PH.D

NEIGHBORS FOR NATIVE PLANTS

BIEKE DAVID PUNCOCHAR, PH.D

LUNCH & NETWORKING 12:30 PM

PANEL DISCUSSION: BECOMING A NATIVE
PLANT ADVOCATE 1:30 PM

MIKE BERKELY, RICHARD HITT, GAIL
EICHELBERGER, MARGIE HUNTER, PAUL PRILL

CLOSING: TAKING ACTION FOR NATIVE
PLANTS IN NASHVILLE 3:00 PM

SUNDAY, MARCH 23

OPTIONAL HALF-DAY FIELD EXCURSION: EXPLORE
LOCAL ECOSYSTEMS AND SEE NATIVE PLANTS IN
ACTION. [EXPLORE FIELD TRIPS HERE](#)

SPEAKERS & ABSTRACTS

OPENING KEYNOTE: “CULTIVATING COMMUNITY” BY JOANNA BRICHETTO

Joanna Brichetto is the author of *This is How a Robin Drinks: Essays on Urban Nature*, an almanac of 52 true stories about our nearest nature. Called “Nashville’s Sidewalk Naturalist,” her goal is to meet all her plant and animal neighbors, and to help human neighbors add native habitat where we live, work, and play. Her motto is Notice, Wonder, Connect, Protect. And she’s a big fan of hackberry trees. It was Jo who coined “Mosquito Bucket of Doom” in hopes the catchy name can inspire people to say no to yard sprays that doom countless other creatures.



Find Jo’s daily urban nature posts on Instagram (@Jo_Brichetto) and monthly dispatches at SidewalkNature.com.

“NATIVE GARDENS ARE FOR THE BIRDS: WHY DO WE CARE ABOUT BIRDS?” BY LAURA COOK

We will discuss why bird populations have declined and the critical role of native plants. We’ll then learn how to create a native garden and the importance of selecting native plants to provide structure and food throughout the season for our native birds.

Laura received her B.S. in Wildlife Biology from Cornell University and her M.S. from Boise State University, studying reintroduction techniques for the endangered Mariana and Hawaiian Crow. She has worked for The Nature Conservancy’s central science division and now serves as the Master Bander and program coordinator for the Friends of Warner Parks and Warner Park Nature Center’s BIRD program.

“NATIVE GARDENS ARE FOR THE BIRDS: HOW CAN NATIVE PLANTS SUPPORT BIRDS?” BY JOY BOVEN

What are the relationships we should be supporting in our local ecosystems and the native plants we should be planting in our own yards to help restore these communities.

Joy is the owner of Wonder Gift & Garden and Simple Joy Nursery and has been in the horticulture industry for 15 years. Having accumulated experience in many tributaries of the green industry, her passion is growing and selling native plant material as well as educating the public on their importance and role in our lives.

“NATIVES NINE TO FIVE” BY IVAN CHESTER

The daily grind of overcoming challenges and knowing the nuances of native plant landscaping.

Ivan, age 44, is the owner of Habitat Landscapes, operating since 2018. Ivan grew up immersed in the natural world of rural Tennessee and now strives to bring that nature back into people's lives through landscape installations and land management.

“FROM IDEA TO VOLUNTEER GARDENER: DIY NATIVE LANDSCAPING” BY DONNIE BRYAN

Donnie is retired from Ensworth, having taught high school theater and visual arts teacher of thirty-seven years. Donnie joined Wild Ones and built a native garden which has been featured on Volunteer Gardener.

“BLOOMING MINDS: CREATING POLLINATOR GARDENS IN LOCAL SCHOOLS, PARKS AND LIBRARIES” BY MONKIA G. PRETZ, PH.D

Tennessee Environmental Council's Pollinator Program builds native wildflower pollinator gardens at Middle Tennessee schools, parks and libraries. Our gardens create thriving habitats for pollinator species, increase biological diversity and provide hands-on educational opportunities for STEM programs. Join the presentation to learn more about how to start a wildflower garden and get your community to work collectively toward a healthier environment and sustainable future.

Monika graduated with a Master of Science degree in Biology and Teaching in Budapest, Hungary and gained her PhD at the University of Groningen, in the Netherlands. She worked as a postdoctoral researcher at the Hungarian Academy of Science in Budapest, and at the Washington University in St. Louis, MO. Currently Monika is Staff Biologist & Pollinator Program Leader at Tennessee Environmental Council where she designs, creates and cares for pollinator gardens providing habitats for plant populations, pollinators and wildlife communities.

“NEIGHBORS FOR NATIVE PLANTS” - BIEKE DAVID PUNCOCHAR, PH.D.

How a community effort to bring native plants to individual yards helps build ecosystems, expand greenspaces, and create pollinator pathways across Tennessee.

Bieke is Co-founder of Neighbors for Native Plants & a Licensed Clinical Psychologist, who was born and raised in Belgium, where she obtained a Master’s degree in Clinical Child Psychology from the University of Leuven prior to initiating further education at Vanderbilt University. When not working, Bieke enjoys spending time with her daughters and husband, exploring nature, practicing piano, and relaxing with friends.

PANEL DISCUSSION: “BECOMING A NATIVE PLANT ADVOCATE”

Local native plant enthusiasts will share their native plant journeys, expertise, and lessons learned, with plenty of time for Q & A from Symposium participants.

PANELISTS

Mike Berkley is co-owner of Growild, Inc. and has experimented with all things native in homeowner’s yards, state and federal parks, on roof tops and in his own yard for over 30 years.

Gail Eichelberger is a Tennessee Naturalist, nature write/blogger at Clay and Limestone.com, and a 35-year native plant gardener on a difficult garden site.

Richard Hitt is a Certified Tennessee Naturalist, experienced interpretive hike leader, and founding President of Wild Ones Middle Tennessee Chapter.

Margie Hunter is the author of Gardening With the Native Plants of Tennessee: The Spirit of Place, cofounder and instructor for the Tennessee Naturalist Program, and an experienced interpretive hike leader.

Paul Prill is a Davidson County Master Gardener, holds a Certificate in Native Plants from the Tennessee Native Plant Society, and is a certified Tennessee Naturalist.