

Berkshire Botanical Garden
Rooted in Place: Ecological Gardening Symposium
Sunday, November 11, 9:00 am – 4 pm
Berkshire School – Sheffield, MA

8:30 – 9:15

Registration, Coffee and Light Refreshments

9:15 – 9:20

Welcome - **Mike Beck**, Executive Director of Berkshire Botanical Garden

9:20 – 10:30

Neil Diboll: Creating Prairie Gardens and Meadows

The use of our native prairie flora in the landscape continues to grow in popularity every year. From small prairie gardens to multi-acre prairie meadows, the prairie flowers and grasses provide year-round drama and interest. A parade of blooms passes across the prairie all summer long, and the prairie grasses steal the show in fall and winter with their crimson and gold autumnal foliage.

The super-hardy prairie plants provide excellent habitat for birds and butterflies, and require little or no fertilizers or pesticides once established. Neil will share his 30 years of experience in planning and designing prairie gardens and meadows, along with step by step procedures for site preparation, planting, and installation of both plants and seeds. Come learn how you can convert a small patch of lawn into a colorful prairie garden, or the “Back 40” into a fabulous prairie meadow!

10:30 – 10:40

Break: Book Sales & Signing

10:40 – 11:50

Dr. Robert J. Gegear: Humming a Different Tune: An Ecological Approach to Native Pollinator Conservation

Pollinators are declining at an unprecedented rate worldwide due to human-induced rapid environmental change. These declines pose a significant threat to our food supply and consequently, there has been major focus on the development and implementation of conservation strategies to maintain pollination services to crop plants. However, the overwhelming majority of current strategies do not consider the keystone role that pollinators play in natural ecosystems, making them an ineffective tool for maintaining and restoring biodiversity. Dr. Robert Gegear of WPI Department of Biology and Biotechnology, and Director of the New England Bee-cology Project, researches and presents on the importance of developing an ecologically-focused approach to developing and maintaining your garden, citing examples from his ongoing field research in Massachusetts.

11:50-1:20 Lunch in Benson Dining Commons

1:20-1:25

What is coming up at BBG?

1:25 - 2:35

Lee Buttala: The Return of the Species: Seeds and Biodiversity

In a horticultural and agricultural universe where hybrids and vegetative propagation have become commonplace, the biodiversity of many species is being bottlenecked even by those with the best of intentions. In this talk about how to maintain the genetic breadth of species and varieties that allow them to adapt and evolve to local conditions and weather change, Lee Buttala advocates for the

importance and ease of growing many of these plants from open-pollinated seed. Citing examples he has learned from writing about seed saving in relation to his work on the preservation of heirloom vegetables at Seed Savers Exchange, Buttala sets forward a simple approach to how we can all contribute to biodiversity in our own backyards, whether we are growing natives, vegetables or ornamental plants, in a manner which is economically and environmentally sound and satisfying, not to mention cost-effective and fun. Learn to preserve the biodiversity of the plant kingdom, one seed at a time.

2:35-2:45

Break: Book Sales & Signing

2:45-3:55

Jeff Lowenfels: Teaming With Microbes and Fungi: The Organic Gardener's Guide to the Soil Food Web

No one ever fertilizes the Redwoods. How did these trees live over 500 years and grow to 380 feet without Miracle-Gro or other chemicals? In an extremely humorous and entertaining presentation, Jeff Lowenfels will tell you and show you how to successfully use the very same natural principles to maintain your yard and grow your gardens. No more chemical fertilizers, pesticides and other nasty chemicals and a lot less work as Jeff shows you how to team with the microbes in your soil! After just one extremely painless and entertaining hour even the 'reluctant spouse' will never use chemicals again. As more and more professionals in all aspects of horticulture are learning about the benefits of mycorrhizal fungi, these symbiotic fungi are becoming readily available to the public as a whole. All gardeners and growers need to learn about mycorrhizal fungi and how to use them as they make a huge, beneficial difference in so many ways. This talk gives you all you need to know, plus a few laughs.

3:55-4:00

Closing & Final Remarks

Visit www.BerkshireBotanical.org to see all of our year-round educational programming!

About our speakers

Neil Diboll is a pioneer in the native plant industry and recognized internationally as an expert in native plant community ecology, and has guided the growth of Prairie Nursery for 30 years. He has dedicated his life to the propagation of native plants and their promotion as uniquely beautiful, ecologically beneficial and sustainable solutions for landscapes and gardens. In 2013 Neil was the recipient of the Great American Gardeners Award from the American Horticultural Society.

Dr. Robert J. Gegear is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biology and Biotechnology at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and the Director of the New England Bee-cology Project. Dr. Gegear's current research focuses on Pollinator neuroecology and conservation, with particular focus on bumblebees native to Massachusetts.

Lee Buttala is the Executive Director of Seed Savers Exchange, a seed bank dedicated to the sharing and saving of seeds that define America's food and garden heritage, and the only non-governmental organization storing seed at the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. Formerly the director of marketing communications for BBG and the Preservation Manager for the Garden Conservancy, he is also the Chair of the Historic Landscapes Committee of the APGA. He was the Emmy-Award winning garden television producer for Martha Stewart Living, the creator of PBS's Cultivating Life and editor of the award-winning book: *The Seed Garden: The Art and Practice of Saving Seed*. He also writes a weekly garden column for the Berkshire Edge and sits on the board of Hollister House Garden in Washington, CT. He studied garden design at the Chelsea Physick Garden, the New York Botanical Garden, and the Kyoto School of Art and Design.

Jeff Lowenfels is the author of a trilogy of award winning books on plants and soil, and he is the longest running garden columnist in North America. Lowenfels is a national lecturer as well as a fellow, hall of fame member, and former president of the Garden Writers of America.