



Formerly Audubon Naturalist Society, Est. 1897

Woodend Native Plant Gardens 2022 Volunteer Diary

Alice Sturm
Garden Program Manager
Nature Forward

alice.sturm@natureforward.org

INTRODUCTION

If you received this document, you are one of our intrepid garden volunteers- thank you! Even if you weren't able to make it into the garden this year, or you only just signed up, I hope you enjoy this summary of 2022 in the native plant gardens. To start, I thought I'd share the garden mission statement/introduction I recently wrote for a guide to Woodend Restoration- I hope it sounds familiar and sets the tone for this record of tasks and observations. Gardening is hard work, and sometimes it can feel sisyphian- weeding, anyone?- but I hope you know that each and every task helped us to our goal of having gardens that support wildlife and educate visitors, all while looking absolutely beautiful.

Garden Mission Statement

Our native plant gardens at Woodend fulfill many functions: we want them to provide **habitat value, education and aesthetic enjoyment, and stormwater management.**

Our gardens are designed and maintained to support these goals. As in our forests and meadows, our top priority is providing habitat for birds, insects, and other wildlife by sustaining a diverse plant population and ensuring that water, shelter, and food is available. In addition to designing with a diverse set of plant species, part of this approach is that we do not "deadhead" flowers once they are done blooming or cut back native grasses in fall, because we want to leave the seed sources for birds to eat and the stems for invertebrates to overwinter. Likewise, we match our plants to the conditions we have to avoid use of fertilizers or significant soil amendments, and we plant with a closed canopy of plants so that our established gardens do not require regular shredded bark mulch applications. In areas near paths, we prune and cut back plants to ensure they do not interfere with circulation, but our focus is on matching plant to place and favoring plants whose natural habit is a good match for the site in terms of visibility needs, access, etc. We leave leaf litter and dead wood wherever possible as habitat for detritivores and those who eat them- it's always fun to watch a woodpecker digging grubs out of the log in our north entry garden, for example.

Along with habitat, we manage our gardens for aesthetics and legibility. For example, we might transplant and re-arrange various plants, even if they are desirable native species, to create simpler compositions that make plant species easier to identify for visitors, from tour groups to field trippers to summer campers. This is part of our "educational" goal for the gardens.

In the Blair Garden, we showcase plant species from different ecoregions of Maryland, and we strive for a level of diversity which would be unlikely to occur in nature in such a small area; to maintain this level of diversity we work to remove or contain certain aggressive native species, so that less aggressive species remain.

We do all of this with a team of dedicated volunteers.

MARCH

MARCH 11

Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) blooming in sunny spots, and popping up all over; Evidence of cicada damage on Inkberry (*Ilex glabra*) and Bayberry (*Morella/Myrica pensylvanica*) becoming more apparent through yellowing.

Pruned Hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*), Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), Inkberry (*I. glabra*) and Bayberry (*M. pensylvanica*).



MARCH 18

Bloodroot (*S. canadensis*) still blooming profusely, Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*) have buds and just starting!

Clean up in the North Garden and the Log Garden. Moved and divided two of the Royal Ferns (*Osmunda regalis*) near the wetspot in the "Coastal Plain."
Saw a Toad!

MARCH 25

One new leaf of Round-lobed Hepatica (*Hepatica nobilis*) starting to unfurl among the spent leaves- blooms on Dutchman's Breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*) in a sunny spot.

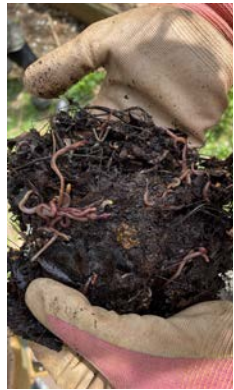
Transplanted the Goat's Beard (*Aruncus dioicus*) into the shade, and moved a St. Johnswort (*Hypericum prolificum*) into the sun in its place. Pulled Strawberry in the "Coastal Plain" and pruned the sweetspire (*Itea virginica*).



APRIL

APRIL 1

Saw a bumble bee visiting the virginia bluebells (*M. virginica*). More asters (*Symphiotrichum spp.*) and goldenrod (*Solidago spp.*) leaves emerging. Reduced goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*) in coastal plain -transplanted some Stonecrop (*Sedum ternatum*) out of the Partridge Berry (*Mitchella repens*).



APRIL 8

Relocated a Rhododendron (*Rhododendron maximum*) to make way for the new fence (and get it into more shade) and shifted some asters and Alum Root (*Heuchera villosa*) into bare spots. Weather is warm enough- and insects appear to have largely emerged, from all the buzzing, so we began more Garden Clean up. Across from the garden the Golden Ragwort (*Packera aurea*) is just starting to bloom. Lots of worm activity in the compost bin.

APRIL 15

The Bayberries (*M. pensylvanica*) got a serious (but needed) pruning from Empire, a contractor, today. The new fence is installed, so we de-compacted the soil in front and replaced the Alum Root (*Heuchera spp.*) we had temporarily removed for the construction. Nothing like a garden fork to reverse the effects of trampling feet! The Fothergilla (*Fothergilla gardenii*) and Phlox (*Phlox divaricata*) in the entryway garden is looking lovely, and the Serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis*) is blooming.



APRIL-MAY

APRIL 22

The Pinxter Azalea (*Rhododendron periclymenoides*) is in bloom, and while the foliage on the Bloodroot is still looking lush, the flowers are gone. Rue anemone (*Thalictrum thalictroides*) and bluebells in shadier spots that bloomed later are still blooming. Flowers on the Dutchman's Breeches (*D. cucullaria*) are gone. Our single Hepatica (*H. nobilis*) is blooming.



APRIL 29

Lovely to see the Fringed Bleedingheart (*Dicentra eximia*) and the Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) blooming side by side. The garden is really filling out- plenty of wild ginger (*Asarum canadensis*), Foxglove Beardtongue (*Penstemon digitalis*), and wood asters (*Eurybia divaricata*) to divide. The Fringed Bleedingheart in particular has moved itself around the garden since last year.

MAY 6

A very rainy day, so we sadly had no volunteers in the garden. However, interesting to see the Bloodroot (*S. canadensis*) foliage just starting to blanch and fade (surrounded by super lush wild ginger (*A. canadensis*), and plenty of green-ness and geraniums (*Geranium maculatum*) to admire despite the wet.



MAY

MAY 13

Another damp day- perfect for planting the two new pinxter azaleas (one shown at right) and the three lowbush blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*) that we added to the Blair Garden. It was also a great day for moving plants around the beds to find them a happier spot. This afforded us the rare opportunity to see the Wild Ginger (*A. canadensis*) flowers; they point down because they are pollinated by ants.



MAY 20

It was time to give the whole garden a good "Chelsea Chop"- that is, cutting back summer and fall blooming perennials, before buds have formed, to encourage bushier and shorter growth. Especially in places near the path, or where we want to keep a line of sight open. This may delay some of our June blooms, but we hope will bear dividends throughout the season. The name comes from the Chelsea Flower show in London, which takes place at the end of May.

MAY 27

The Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) and the Foxglove Beardtongue (*Penstemon digitalis*) are blooming together- truly a banner year for the Beardtongue, and quite a week for white flowers! The Beardtongue has spread throughout the garden and looks beautiful- apparently it likes a wet spring.



JUNE

JUNE 3

The eastern prickly pear's (*Opuntia humifusa*) first blooms of the season opened during our volunteer session! A nice reward for a hard day's work. It was a good day to do some transplanting and re-arranging, as rain came in the afternoon.



JUNE 10

The large rhododendron (*Rhododendron maximum*) is putting on a show in the "Mountains" of the Blair Garden- elsewhere things are looking very lush and full. The Purple Coneflowers (*Echinacea purpurea*) across the walk are opening as well, and pollinators are finding them. Worth noting: purple coneflowers are native to the east coast, but not native to Maryland. They were planted by accident in our gardens- but they're lovely, and they have wildlife value, so we let them stay.

JUNE 17

The wild (or smooth) hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*) is blooming, as is the Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*). The garden is very tall; the Foxglove Beardtongue (*P. digitalis*) are finally calling it quits, after a banner year, and there's fruit on the Serviceberry (*A. canadensis*) for the birds. During hydrangea season we particularly appreciate our deer fence!



JUNE-JULY

JUNE 24

We can admire the fruits of our late May Chelsea Chop of the Coral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) by enjoying the profuse blooms that are not waving their way into the walkway. The Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) is a bee magnet! Spent some time trying to free it of Bindweed (*Convolvulus spp.*), which is a challenge.



JULY 1

The "Coastal Plain" has grown to be taller than our heads, despite several early season cut-backs, with the help of our very wet spring, but is still a lush green with only the delicate white Tall Meadow Rue (*Thalictrum pubescens*) in bloom. In the "Mountains," the St. Johnswort's (*H. prolificum*) profuse, open blooms are abuzz with bees. This shrub has a long season of bloom; it's been blooming for a week already and should continue for another six.

JULY 8

Some violent storms and high winds have laid many of our flowers down- the Wild Bergamot, Ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*), Joe-Pye Weed (*Eupatorium dubium*), Purple Coneflower, and Black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia fulgida*) are beautiful and covered with pollinators, but laying over our paths. We spend some time trellising, and marveling at how tall they have grown despite numerous cut-backs!



JULY/AUGUST

JULY 15

The Rose Mallow (*Hibiscus moscheutos*) in the Blair Garden has begun to open up, with more of the Ironweed, Joe-Pye, and the Purple Lovegrass in bloom. The importance of micro-climate is clear; elsewhere on the site, the Rose Mallow in the Rain Garden has yet to bloom or even form mature flower buds. We began our project of replacing plant ID signs throughout the garden.



AUGUST 5

Purple lovegrass (*Eragrostis spectabilis*) has turned purple and is living up to its name.

While it's so hot at this time of year that weeding, trellising, and keeping paths clear are our main tasks, it's also a good time to take stock: what plants did we have to trellis or prune two or more times so far this season? What are chronically weedy or bare spots that might benefit from fall planting? What plants look like they need to be divided?

AUGUST 19

The Joe Pye Weed (*E. dubium*) and Ironweed (*V. noveboracensis*) is blooming in both the Blair Garden and the Fallen Log Garden. Despite being cut back twice earlier in the season, the wet year has ensured that they are still at least 8' tall. The Late Boneset (*Eupatorium serotinum*), which is a volunteer in the garden, and the Canada Goldenrod (*S. canadensis*), are similarly tall.



AUGUST - SEPTEMBER

AUGUST 26

The Purple Coneflower (*E. purpurea*) is still in full bloom, and even the Coral Honeysuckle (*L. sempervirens*) is still blooming. The Wild Bergamot (*M. fistulosa*) is starting to fade- we see at least one goldfinch per day enjoying its seeds. Soon the Black-eyed susans will also be providing finch food, but right now it's still in bloom.



SEPTEMBER 9

The transplantation project began in earnest- all of the very tall material in the fallen log garden and in the entry of the Blair Garden began to be transplanted to the meadow, where they will provide a lush edge. We are enjoying rediscovering the plants that were concealed among them. We even dug up a Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*) tree and two Redbuds (*Cercis canadensis*) that were at least six feet tall!

SEPTEMBER 2

All summer we've been weeding- too hot to move plants we want to keep, not kill. And today we did some weeding ahead of transplanting a lot of the taller material from the gardens to the meadows.

It's almost cool enough now to begin to implement the fall planting, dividing, and transplanting that we've been mulling over during the hot summer months.



SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER 16

The relocation project continues- this time across the way in the Blair Garden, where we removed Monkeyflower (*Mimulus regens*) and Ironweed run amoc to make sure visitors have the chance to appreciate the purple love grass (*E. spectabilis*), common rush (*Juncus effusus*), and royal ferns (*O. regalis*) that we revealed.

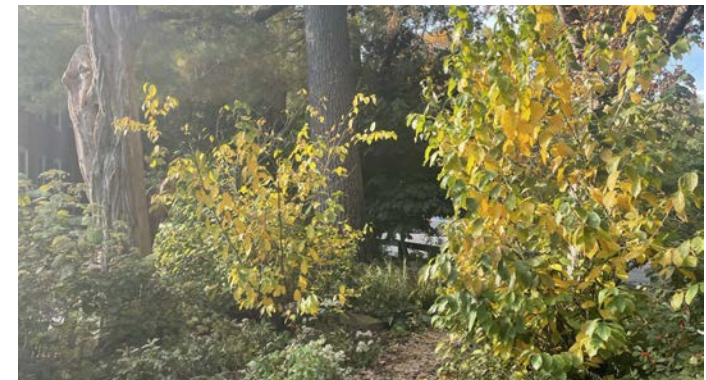


SEPTEMBER 23

One of the pleasures of an established garden is rearranging things- we used volunteer white wood asters (*Eurybia divaricata*) from all along the path to re-plant areas where we removed plants that were too tall, or where we weeded out some undesirable species, such as at this corner, which has long featured on the "Weedy bare spots" list. Blue Lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*) is blooming as well.

SEPTEMBER 30

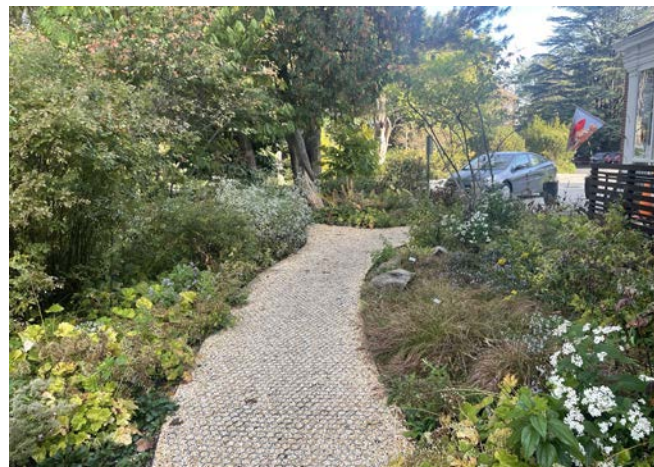
Fall is here! While our Coral Honeysuckle (*L. sempervirens*) is still blooming, our American Beautyberry (*Callicarpa dichotoma*) is showing off its purple berries against yellow leaves, and the Spice Bush (*Lindera benzoin*) and Paw Paws (*Asimina triloba*) have begun to turn yellow. The latter gave us fruit for the first time this year. The squirrels got it all, but there's always next year!



OCTOBER

OCTOBER 7

It's fall feasting season! Plenty of evidence of eating in the gardens, from pawpaw seeds to prickly pear (*O. humilis*) fruits to walnuts carried from across the driveway, to acorns.



OCTOBER 14

We're finishing our transplanting sweep of the gardens- some volunteer White Snakeroot (*Ageratina altissima*) in the Mountains of the Blair Garden have been transplanted into a tighter group at the bend of the path, so that they look more ornamental and intentional.

The Bluestem Goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*) is buzzing with pollinators and looking beautiful.

OCTOBER 21

Some of the Fothergilla (*F. gardenii*) that is along the north facade does not get enough sun for fall color, though it still exhibits lovely spring blooms- but the white wood asters (*E. divaricata*) are peaking. Elsewhere, the Fothergilla is showing off.

Time to plant lower growing natives are being planted in chronically weedy spots, and places we removed taller material.



OCTOBER-NOVEMBER

OCTOBER 28

Admiring the “grow-your-own” birdfeeder in our north entry/fallen log beds- little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) provides a beautiful backdrop for seed heads of purple coneflower (*E. purpurea*). Meanwhile, Blue Mist (*Conoclinium coelestinum*) and White Snakeroot (*A. altissima*) are providing late food for pollinators.



NOVEMBER 4

Always interesting to see the effects of microclimate in the garden- these two Winterberries (*Ilex verticillata*), both female straight species, are looking pretty different just ten yards apart! Both have a beautiful berry set we expect to be popular with birds once they’ve undergone a freeze-thaw cycle, which is what renders them palatable to birds.

NOVEMBER 11

A few unseasonably warm weeks have led to some spring blooms in the garden! Fringed Bleeding Heart (*D. eximia*), Crested Iris (*Iris cristata*), and others are giving us a (much too early) preview of spring. Meanwhile, the New York asters (*Symphiotrichum novi-belgii*) and honeysuckle are still putting on a show, while most of the wood asters and goldenrods have gone to seed. See you next year!



NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER 18

Our final day and a fond farewell to the 2022 Season of Native Plant Gardening at Woodend! We put away hoses and grabbed some weeds, and made sure we left time to clean our shovels and trowels for the season's end.



Year-in-Review in Pictures



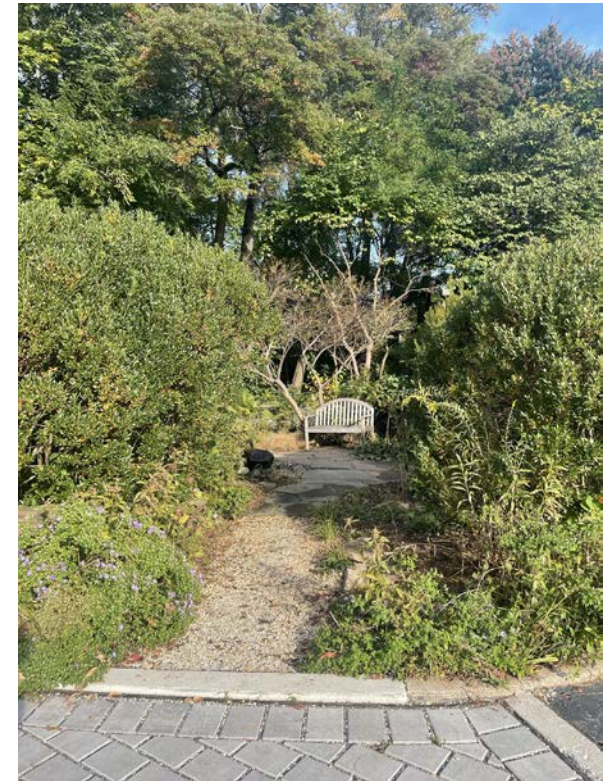
The log is visible- and, more importantly, so are the sightlines between the accessible parking and the entrance.



Shade Garden showing off.



New fence looks like it's always been there.



Seating area looking open and inviting

2022 SEASON SUMMARY

42 volunteers worked 560 hours in the gardens!



Volunteers planted 311+ plants!

We planted 11 shrubs (3 Lowbush Blueberries (*V. corymbosum*), 2 Pinxter Azaleas (*R. periclymenoides*), 2 Winterberry (*I. verticillata*), 1 Silky Dogwood (*Cornus amomum*) and 3 Black Chokeberries (*Aronia melanocarpa*). We planted 300 perennials! 60 Blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium angustifolium*), 10 Crested Iris (*I. cristata*), 67 Roundleaf Ragwort (*Packera obovata*), 10 Bluestar (*Amsonia tabernaemontana*), 4 Little Bluestem (*S. scoparium*), 2 Great Blue Lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*), 5 Woodland Phlox (*P. divaricata*), 5 Smooth Blue Aster (*S. laevis*), 2 Anise Hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*), 12 blue flag irises (*Iris versicolor*), 12 Purple Lovegrass (*E. spectabilis*), 7 butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), 10 fox sedge (*Carex vulpinoidea*), 65 black-eyed susans (*R. fulgida*), 13 clustered mountainmint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*), and 16 Rose Mallow (*H. moscheutos*). And maybe some more I'm forgetting....

We Transplanted 100+ Plants!

That doesn't even include the plants we TRANSplanted! I have to estimate here, but at least this many. Garden volunteers did the digging out and potting up; we got an assist from the meadow volunteers in the re-planting of all the big & beautiful natives that were a little too big, beautiful, and numerous for the gardens. And of course, lots of intra-garden transplanting as well... "wouldn't that grass look better just a smidge to the right?"

We added 45+ signs!

We added signs identifying the native plants throughout our gardens for visitors and volunteers to learn from. Garden volunteers helped print, assemble, and arrange signs.



We grew food!

Snap peas, shelling peas, watermelon, acorn squash, scotch bonnet peppers, slicing tomatoes, paste tomatoes, sweet potatoes, two varieties of popcorn, scarlet runner beans, mizuna, spinach, basil, two varieties of eggplant, sweet italian peppers, bell peppers, and cucumbers are among the annuals we grew in the garden this year.

Perennial food crops include elderberries, raspberries, strawberries, blueberries, pawpaws, oregano, sorrel, savory, asparagus and more!

We received compliments!

I can't count how many times I've been told our gardens looked beautiful this year- and it's all thanks to you! I so enjoyed gardening with all 42 of you this year, and I can't wait for next year! Have a wonderful winter, and I'll see you in the spring.

Thank you!!!

... and see you in the Spring!
