



2008 Native Plant Sale: Growing Green!
by Joanne Donohue, Assistant Director of Land Rehabilitation



Coming soon! Our 4th Annual Native Plant Sale, sponsored by Audubon Pennsylvania, featuring trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants indigenous to southeast Pennsylvania. Plants that our local wildlife depend on for food, shelter, and nesting areas.

In a world of disappearing habitat, native plants have become ever more important not just in the natural areas we visit, but in our own backyards. So as growers of native plants, we're doing good, right? What if we could do better?

For the past four years, our goal has been to provide you, our patrons, with healthy native plants that will perform well in your garden. Recently, it occurred to us that we could still do so with less of an impact on the environment. So here's what we've been doing:

- We switched from synthetic fertilizer to an organic blend. Not only does organic fertilizer require less energy to manufacture, but it also promotes a balanced soil environment from which the plant derives its nourishment. Think of it as the "slow food" of the plant world. Instead of a "quick fix" of elements and minerals to the plant, organic fertilizer provides a steady source of nutrition that builds healthier soil, with a balance of beneficial fungi and microorganisms that create just the type of soil environment plants need. With healthier soil

comes healthier plants, which are better able to withstand adverse conditions- pests, drought, and cold.

- We've been reusing our pots and enlisting you for help! Think for a moment. After you plant, where does that plastic pot usually end up? If you can't recycle it with your local waste service company, it most likely ends up in the landfill, where it will remain for...ever? Why not recycle that pot to be used again? Doing so not only keeps non-biodegradable materials out of our landfills, but also saves the energy of manufacturing and shipping new pots every year. Over the past two seasons, you've helped us keep over 1000 pots in production. Keep up the good work!
- We support local genetic diversity by responsibly harvesting seed from our own grounds. By doing this, we preserve all the characteristics that make these plants adapted to our environment: the hot summers, cold winters, and everything in between.
- Our plants are insecticide-free! Because we believe in growing healthy plants from the roots up, we don't feel the need to spray at the first sign of insects. One walk through the nursery area and you'll see why: ladybugs, praying mantises, birds, even a few American toads make regular rounds. We think these creatures do enough pest control for us.
- We provide tech support! Bring your gardening questions to the Sale, and we'll give you sound advice on using native plants to maximize habitat and species diversity in your backyard. Look for Audubon PA's Steve Saffier and SCEE's Land Restoration staff!

Each year, we try to improve the way we bring quality native plants to you. We hope you appreciate our efforts as much as we appreciate your support!

Mark your calendars now for the Native Plant Sale, taking place on Friday, May 2nd (members only), Saturday, May 3rd, and Sunday, May 4th.

Go to www.schuylkillcenter.org for more details about the sale in the coming months. In March, look for the downloadable version of our Native Plant Sale catalog, with a complete plant list, pictures, and articles.

See you at the sale!

Special thanks to Duffy Brothers Landscaping of Glenside for helping to clean up debris at The Schuylkill Center's Organic Gardens!