



**"Advocating for responsible stewardship
of land and natural resources in
landscaping and horticultural practices."**

April 2015

ELA advocates for responsible stewardship of land and natural resources, including that fundamental resource of the landscape: soil. Healthy, productive soil is not just a local but a global concern, and 2015 has been named the [International Year of Soils \(IYS\)](#) by the United Nations. IYS 2015 plans to raise awareness of the importance of soil for human life and to educate the public about the crucial role of soil in food security and essential ecosystem functions. Visit the [Soil Science Society of America's](#) website for a variety of resources and activities featuring soils. And take part in soil related events hosted this year by ELA and our collaborators New England Wildflower Society and the Soil and Water Conservation Society.



2015
International
Year of Soils

In celebration of the Year of Soils, this issue of the newsletter includes soil focused articles, with a follow up from ML Altobelli on her ongoing hugelkulture projects, a soil primer and look at the tough winter by John Rice, and soil related Answers from the Eco-Pros. In addition to reading about soil, you can [view Symphony of the Soil](#) and listen to the discussion on soil held at the Museum of Science in 2014. Enjoy the articles, and as you dig into the soil this spring, take a moment to celebrate this amazing natural resource. *MS*

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Update on the Hugelkulture (HK) Beds at Woody End Farm

by M.L. Altobelli

The primary goal of the Hugelkulture beds at Woody End Farm was to combine the surplus of woody debris resulting from the 2008 ice storm in western MA with other resources on the farm and make something positive out of all the pieces. Checking in seven years later, the beds have remained physically stable, biologically active, and productive over time - with a few tweaks and lessons learned. [Read the article.](#)



Report from Soil Biology School

by John Rice

Soil is a fascinating resource, especially when explored under the microscope. Find out some of the activity taking place in the soil out in your yard and learn what keeping your soil healthy means for your landscape. [Read the article.](#)



Plant Material Issues in This Kind of Winter

by John Rice

The cold and deep snow of January and February have taken a toll on Massachusetts' landscapes. Before the snow receded, the effects of the harsh weather were already evident in many trees and shrubs. This overview of the lingering effects of the harsh weather on plants also looks at problems that you might expect to develop over the next few months. [Read the article.](#)

Eco-Answers from the Pros

ELA members have spent hundreds of hours learning the best ecological solutions to problems in the landscape. You can benefit from all that accumulated knowledge by posing a question to our experts. If you are stumped by a problem in your landscape or are looking for a second opinion on a potential solution, ask ELA's Eco-Pros. Send your question to ela_new@verizon.net. And if you need additional help, refer to the listing of [ELA Professionals](#).



Sustainable Soil Mix

I am a landscape designer with a maintenance crew working on Martha's Vineyard. We are reviewing our Specifications to update to sustainable practice. I have previously specified for soils to be used for backfilling plants and filling perennial beds a mix of Earthlife Compost (3 parts), peat moss (2 parts) and sand (1 part). Is there a better mix in light of insuring a healthy planet? I have seen 7 parts topsoil 1 part peat moss in another Spec and also have seen we should not be using peat moss. Thanks for any light you can shed on this. [Read the Pros' answers.](#)



Recipe for Successful Container Gardens

I am considering going organic in my self-watering container garden and in doing research I found an article describing M.L. Altobelli's fertilizer blend containing Gro Pro fertilizer, alfalfa meal, and Azomite. Other things I have read described the benefits of all these components. Could you give me a recommended ratio of these for tomatoes, peppers and eggplant? I used a potting mix blend of Coco Coir, Vermiculite, Perlite and Vermiblend last year but will be adding 10-25% homemade compost this year. [Read the Pros' answers.](#)



An Environmental Vision. The Award Goes To....

For the second year running, [The Massachusetts Horticultural Society's](#) exhibit at the Boston Flower & Garden Show received the Ecological Landscape Alliance Environmental Vision Award. This year's exhibit, "An Enchanted New England Woodland Walk," featured the border where planned landscape meets woods from a child's perspective. [Read the article.](#)



ELA Announces New Educational Opportunity

The Ecological Landscape Alliance (ELA) is pleased to announce a new hands-on training program, the ELA Eco-Workshop Series. This program provides practical tips and hands-on experience for landscape professionals interested in learning new skills - at a very affordable price. Join Trevor Smith on Sunday, May 3rd to learn [green roof basics](#) including construction, installation, and maintenance at the first ELA Eco-Workshop. Registrations are limited to ensure a valuable learning experience so [reserve your spot today!](#)

Nominate Your Project for a Workshop

Do you have a client who wants a green roof, rain garden, rainwater harvesting system, or an aquatic habitat (garden pond, pond-less water feature, or waterfall)? Or, perhaps you have always wanted one of these ecological elements in your own landscape. For the cost of materials alone, you or your client could take advantage of ELA professional expertise and free installation by participating as a project site for an upcoming Eco-Workshop. For more information and to nominate a project for consideration, please contact Trevor Smith <mailto:trevscape@comcast.net>.



Donate to ELA and Receive an Extractigator as a Gift!

Support ELA now, and the Extractigator you receive as a thank you gift will help you clear invasives for years to come! The Extractigator puller uses your weight, rather than strength, to remove buckthorn, Scotch broom, honeysuckle, buckthorn, and other invasive plants.

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ELA is a 501(c)3 nonprofit and as such your donation may be tax deductible. The tax deduction is limited to the excess of the contribution over the fair market value of the item received in exchange for the donation.

Gleanings

We're Changing Things UP! Save the Dates for ELA's 2016 Conference

ELA's 22nd Annual Conference & Eco-Marketplace will be held at the [UMass Amherst Campus Center](#) on March 9 and 10, 2016. According to Penny Lewis, ELA Executive Director, "We've already received lots of positive feedback on the new venue, and we're very enthusiastic about connecting with ecological researchers and educators who are accomplishing great work at UMass." The UMass Center offers conference venue and hotel accommodations on the same site with some tantalizing local food options.

Great education, great networking, great new venue. Don't miss out; save those dates!



South Shore Members' Reception

Current and future ELA members: this one's for you! You asked for more opportunities to gather and talk with other ELA members about projects and strategies. Here's a great chance to do just that. You're invited to the South Shore Members' Reception on April 23rd from 5:30 to 7:30pm. We are being hosted by the Southeastern Pine Barrens Alliance, an ELA collaborator, at their beautiful new Community Center.

Sue Storer, ELA founding member, commented that the Members' Receptions bring ELA back to its beginnings with "small informal gatherings of practitioners eager for opportunities to compare notes, share information and resources, and often collaborate on projects." This event is free; just let us know you are planning to attend. [Click here to sign up.](#)



Name that Plant!

Each year, ELA Conference attendees test their knowledge of winter plant identification with the annual ELA Conference Plant ID Quiz. The challenging plant quiz for 2015 was curated by staff members at the New England Wild Flower Society.

The overall 2015 Plant ID Quiz winner was Lauren Chase-Rowell, landscape designer, author, and educator from New Hampshire. With the only perfect quiz score achieved, Lauren takes home bragging rights among her colleagues along with a free one-year ELA Membership. Congratulations to Lauren and also to Michael Swartz from Connecticut, the second winner of a free ELA Membership for his "runner-up" entry in the Plant ID Quiz.

Still not sure how you did on the quiz? [Click here](#) to view the answer key.



New England Grows Winner

This year's winner of a free one-day pass to ELA's Conference and Eco-Marketplace was Franco Campanello with Southwest Corridor Park Conservancy. This was Franco's first time at the ELA Conference, but he's already planning to attend again next year. He noted that he learned "some

great stuff" and was incorporating native plants and trees into a project based on information from one of the sessions he attended.



Lowe's Announces Phase Out of Neonics

Lowe's recently announced that it would begin a phase out of neonicotinoid products over two years and will work with growers to eliminate the use of neonicotinoid pesticides on plants attractive to bees. The company's Social Responsibility Report identifies additional steps the company will be taking to support pollinator health. Refer to page 26 of the company's [2014 Social Responsibility Report](#) for additional information.



Chemical Free Weeding Promoted in Sydney

[The Weed's Network](#) surveyed 986 weeding stakeholders in 2014 to learn about their attitudes and experiences with herbicides. They found that 78% per cent of people who use herbicides believe that herbicides contribute to pollution. Further, 75% cent of those surveyed who use herbicides want to use less. While herbicide users may desire to use less herbicide, the necessary knowledge to reduce herbicide use is lacking. The Weed's Network findings also showed that the majority of people who currently use herbicides are worried about the potential ill effects these chemicals might have on their health and their environment.

The Weed's Network has taken up the challenge posed by the survey findings. With the assistance of partnering organizations around Australia it is convening a series of 'ChemFree Weed Management Workshops' around Australia. On the March 30th they partnered with Greater Sydney Local Land Services to convene a workshop in Sydney. The day-long workshop featured [11 speakers](#) who presented the latest practical knowledge on proven approaches to weed management without chemical input. Refer to [The Weed's Network](#) website for more information.



Highlight Your Project and Win \$

Land&Landscape is holding a contest to locate landscapes to be featured in their magazine. There are seven categories, including some with more ecological focus. You submit only a few photos and 300-400 word description. [Click for details.](#)



Speaking and Exhibiting Opportunity

The [Sustainable Living Festival](#) to be held in Wellesley on May 16th is looking for speakers as well as local landscapers to exhibit. Find more information on the festival website.



Events to Note (listings indicate local time unless otherwise noted)

April 16 - [Pursuit of Sustainable Living](#); Devens, MA; 8:00am-4:30pm.

April 18 - [The 100-Square-Foot, 25-Tree, 5-Variety Backyard Apple Orchard Fruiting Wall](#); Marshfield, MA; 10:00am-2:00pm.

April 18 - [Slowing the Storm: StormWater Expo 2015](#); Springfield, VT; 9:00am-noon.

April 22 - [Jens Jensen The Living Green: A Documentary Film Screening & Panel Discussion](#); NY Botanic Garden, NY; 6:30-8:30pm.

April 23 **ELA Event**→[ELA Members' Reception](#); SEMPBA Community Center, Plymouth, MA; 5:30-7:30pm.

April 24 - [The Future of Water in Southeastern Massachusetts](#); Plymouth, MA; 8:00am-5:00pm.

April 25 - [Earth Day for Buzzards Bay Expo](#); Fairhaven, MA; 10:00am-4:00pm.

April 25 - [Healthy Soil - Testing and Amending Your Garden Soil](#); Dover, MA; 10:00am-12:00pm.

April 25 - [Mass Audubon's 9th Annual Statewide Volunteer Day](#); sites around MA; 9:00am-noon.

April 26 - [Brewing Compost Tea](#); Framingham, MA; 9:00am-2:00pm.

April 27 - [Scouting for Early-Season Landscape Pests and Problems](#); UMass Amherst, Amherst, MA; 4:30-6:30pm.

May 1 - [Guilt-Free Grass - Installing a Water Neutral and Drought Tolerant Lawn](#); Soquel, CA; 9:00-11:00am.

May 3 **ELA Event**→[Green Roof Bus Shelter: Installation Workshop](#); Boston, MA; 9:00-11:30am.

May 6 - [Land Stewardship for Pollinator Conservation](#); Cambridge, MA; 7:00-8:30pm.

May 6 -[Gardening for Pollinators](#); Whately, MA; 6:00-8:30pm.

May 9 - [Naturalistic Garden Symposium](#); Framingham, MA; 8:00am-5:30pm.

May 9 - [Native Pollinator Conservation](#); North Andover, MA; 10:00am-2:00pm.

May 16 - [Native Plant Sale, Grow Native Massachusetts](#); Waltham, MA; 9:00am-4:00pm.

May 20 - [Xerces Society Pollinator Conservation Short Course](#); Dover, MA; 9:00am-4:30pm.

May 21 **ELA Event**→[Alumnae Valley at Wellesley College](#); Wellesley, MA; 1:00-3:00pm.

May 23 - [From Container Gardens to Rain Gardens](#); Andover, MA; 7:00-8:00pm.

May 30 - [Pine Fest: A Pine Barrens Multicultural Celebration](#); Myles Standish State Forest; 10:00am-4:00pm

May 31-June 6 - [Trees and Shrubs of Northeastern North America: Identification and Ecology](#); Steuben, ME.

June 5 **ELA Event**→[Sustainable Sites Tour](#) - Rhode Island; 9:30am-3:00pm.

June 16, 23, & 30 **ELA Event**→[Herbaceous Native Plants for Professionals](#); Framingham, MA; 10:00am-1:30pm.

June 22-26 - [APGA Conference: Watering Our Roots to Grow Our Communities](#); Minneapolis, MN.

June 23-24 - [A Hands-On Wetland Restoration Workshop for Professionals](#); Long Pasture Wildlife Sanctuary, Barnstable, MA.

July 14, 21 & 28 **ELA Event**→[Landscape for Life](#); Framingham, MA; 9:00am-12:00pm.

July 14-28 - [Hydrangeas 2015 International Conference](#); Sandwich, MA; 8:30am-4:30pm.

August 2 **ELA Event**→[Kill Your Lawn](#); Framingham, MA; 9:00am-3:00pm.

August 9-15 - [Botany at the Landscape Scale](#); Steuben, ME.



Field Manager/Crew Leader

BlueFlax Design specializes in conservation permitting, wetlands restoration, and ecological design focused on the use of native plant species. Located in Mattapoisett, MA, the company focuses on Cape Cod and the Islands, South Coast, and the South Shore. We are seeking a full-time employee for a hybrid position consisting mainly of fieldwork with some administrative/office responsibilities.

[See the full job description.](#) To apply, contact Theresa at theresa@blueflaxdesign.com.

Grounds Maintenance

Perkins School for the Blind seeks a full-time employee to maintain the school grounds in a well-kept condition. Perkins School for the Blind, located near Boston, was the first school for the blind chartered by the United States in 1829. For over 180 years, Perkins School for the Blind has provided quality educational and residential services to students who are blind, visually impaired or deafblind, empowering them to reach their maximum potential. Perkins School for the Blind embraces diversity in ability, thought, culture and belief. We provide equal education and employment opportunities and value the unique talents and contributions of all of our students and staff. Log into our [online job center](#) for additional information.

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Whether you are located in the area of our upcoming events or in some distant landscape, you are invited to participate in ELA collaborations and discussions by joining the Ecological Landscape Alliance discussion group on LinkedIn. The ELA discussion group is open to both ELA members and non-members from around the world and participation is growing each week. Through these discussions you can share information, get answers to landscape problems, and learn new perspectives on challenging ecological issues. Joining LinkedIn is free and it is easy to join.

[Join the ELA LinkedIn Discussion](#). We look forward to hearing from you soon.

We hope that you enjoy this edition of the ELA newsletter and welcome your comments at ela.info@comcast.net. Maureen Sundberg, ELA Newsletter Editor