



Sustaining the Living Landscape

The 26th Annual ELA Conference & Eco-Marketplace
March 4 & 5, 2020 at the UMass Murray D. Lincoln Campus Center, Amherst, MA



WEDNESDAY March 4, 2020 Intensive Sessions

DEVELOPING MEADOWS FROM THE GROUND UP (Auditorium)

9:00-10:30am

Meadow Preparation Using Ecological Processes and No Synthetic Chemicals

Michael Nadeau, Wholistic Land Care Consulting, LLC

The most frequent reason for meadow failure is poor site preparation. Complete control of the existing vegetation AND the seed/propagule bank must be achieved before seeding can be done successfully. Mr. Nadeau will take an in-depth look at proper preparation of the meadow site using ecological processes and making well-considered choices. This presentation looks at exploiting weaknesses and vulnerabilities, nutrient sequestration, breaking the photosynthetic sequence, root maceration, seed bank destruction, organically acceptable vegetation control measures, the importance of timing and persistence, and more. Mr. Nadeau shines a bright light on the fallacy that meadow propagation is best accomplished with synthetic chemicals.

11:00am-12:30pm

Meadows: If You Build It They Will Come

Pennington Marchael, Pennington Grey

Mr. Marchael presents an overview of meadow creation and design along with the biodiversity that results from putting back what nature intended. This presentation offers a glimpse into the rich species diversity that comes from establishing a meadow and making the right choices from design through maintenance. Plant communities that dominate the natural ecosystems will be a focus.

2:00-3:30pm

Grasses and Sedges for the Meadow Habitat

Leslie Duthie, Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary

Native grasses and sedges shine in the meadow, providing color and textural beauty, filling spaces that would yield to weeds, preventing soil erosion, and supporting pollinators, birds, and small mammals. They are essential components of a low-maintenance wildflower meadow. Integral to the meadow landscape, grasses and sedges play a variety of design roles, from low-key groundcover to seasonal superstar. Grasses are an excellent food source while providing nesting habitat, shelter, and protection for birds, mammals, and a large array of insects. Highly-adaptable sedges also protect soil and provide food for wildlife, especially for seed-eating turkey, grouse, and songbirds, but also for rabbits, deer, and a variety of insects, which eat the leaves and stems.

4:00-5:30pm

Converting Lawns into Wildflower Meadows

Cathy Neal, Horticulture Specialist and UNH Extension Professor Emeritus

Given widespread concern over declines in pollinator populations, many landowners want to convert lawn areas into wildflower meadows that provide safe habitat for bees and other beings; however, establishing a wildflower meadow takes skill, time, and effort. Dr. Neal guides us through the process from start to finish, considering everything from the best options for killing existing vegetation before seeding, through best planting practices and appropriate seed/species mixes, to maintenance during and after establishment. With proper care, a meadow will become a long-term, low-impact landscape component, providing beauty, connecting people with nature, and providing excellent habitat for pollinators.



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UNDERSTANDING SOIL FROM MICRO TO MACRO (Room 163 C)

9:00–10:30am

Respecting the Soil: Research and Results from the Field

Mark Highland, *Organic Mechanics Soil Company*

Soil is the base of every landscape, and yet soil problems frequently contribute to plant stress and/or failure post installation. Whether you are designing landscapes from scratch or rehabilitating soils in established landscapes, this session has “the dirt” you are looking for. Mr. Highland will discuss Best Management Practices to maximize soil biological and physical properties - before, during, and after a landscape installation. This session will also cover soil amendments that help alleviate soil compaction and improve biological activity.

11:00am–12:30pm

Designing and Implementing Urban Ecologies Part 1: Urban Soils Through the Lens of Urban Forestry

Michael Ormston-Holloway, *The Planning Partnership*

Mr. Ormston-Holloway will frame the current state of urban forestry through his professional path to landscape architect, urban ecologist, and urban forester. He will discuss misconceptions in common arboricultural practices, as well as the importance and potential of trees in the urban landscape and the reasons good stewardship matters.

2:00–3:30pm

Evaluating Soil with the Comprehensive Assessment of Soil Health (CASH)

Kirsten Kurtz, *Cornell University*

Soil health has become something of a buzz word in the past few years, but many are unfamiliar with what soil health means. Ms. Kurtz will discuss big-picture issues including characteristics of healthy soil as well as the global importance of soil health in the face of increased soil degradation. Additionally, she will explore quantifying soil health through laboratory analyses included in the Comprehensive Assessment of Soil Health (CASH) and will address management strategies for improving and maintaining soil health under different cropping systems.

4:00pm–5:30pm

Designing and Implementing Urban Ecologies Part 2: Landscape Diagnostics Through Case Studies

Michael Ormston-Holloway, *The Planning Partnership*

The world of development in dense urban cores of large cities is a difficult place these days to establish a healthy urban forest. We need to begin with healthy and unimpeded soil volumes, a requirement that is proving to be more and more difficult to meet. Mr. Ormston-Holloway will discuss contemporary ideas and methods toward establishing the urban forest amid constraints of urban development and various stakeholders. This presentation will consider a broad range of projects, including the establishment of a new neighborhood and urban forest on a severely contaminated brownfield site and the re-establishment of a dramatic urban forest devastated by a tornado.



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THURSDAY March 5, 2020 Conference Sessions

DESIGN PRESENTATIONS (Auditorium)

9:00–10:30am

What Do You Mean You're Not a Perennial? Native Shrubs Managed as Cut-Backs

Dan Jaffe, Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary

We don't normally think of cutting back shrubs. We occasionally prune, but cutting these plants back to the ground seems counter-intuitive and, and yet, for select species, treating shrubs as cut-backs can offer advantages not found in the herbaceous perennial spectrum or options for the same species left uncut." From ensuring the brightest stems on your red twig dogwood to hydrangeas under drip lines with heavy snow loads, there are some unique uses for shrubby cutbacks. Mr. Jaffe explores new ways to use woody species.

11:00am–12:30pm

Designing with Ferns: the Dependable and the Divisive

Leslie Duthie, Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary

New England is home to over 70 different species of ferns. Leaving ferns out of your garden plans is to miss a lovely assortment of foliage, forms, and color. Ferns are tough and adaptable plants; many will thrive under a wide range of conditions. Learn about the diversity among ferns and how to use these plants in the garden. Although Ms. Duthie will focus on garden-worthy species, she will discuss the uses of some of the more aggressive species as well. She will also introduce fern terminology and basic fern biology - they reproduce by spores. Discover the important ecological role of ferns in the landscape and how they are affected by mammal populations and soil conditions.

2:00–3:30pm

A Stick in the Spokes: Intervening with Regenerative Approaches

Laura Kuhn, Laura Kuhn Design Consultation

Regenerative design depends on a feedback web of

many processes for life to renew and restore. On the other hand, even ecologically-informed maintenance of private property usually involves some intervention to arrest succession, maintain access, and preserve other essential functions. How do we embrace principles of regenerative design on private land parcels where functional needs preclude true rewilding? What happens when we invite and then interrupt the feedback loop in some aspects of a place, but not in others? We'll review transformations of different sized local properties and explore how we can maximize ecological benefits for our natural and social communities when our loftiest goals may be out of reach. Projects will include a small urban wild near the "Mass Pike," a barrier beach restoration where wind dominates, the partial-rewilding of a suburban McMansion, a transformed agricultural parcel, and others.

4:00–5:30pm

Creating Outdoor Spaces that Connect Children to the Natural World

Nancy Striniste, EarlySpace, LLC

Nature play can awaken children's senses, challenge their bodies, inspire their imaginations, and build self-confidence. In order to grow up healthy and happy, children need abundant unstructured time to play and explore in the natural world, but today's children rarely have the opportunity to roam free outside. Bringing nature to the places where children spend their time is an answer. Well-designed nature play spaces are inviting and endlessly engaging for children AND good for the planet. With rich, inspiring images from around the world, author, educator, and landscape designer Nancy Striniste explains why and how to bring the beauty, adventure, and sustainability of nature play to backyards, schoolyards, churchyards, neighborhood parks, early childhood settings, and more.



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PRACTICES (Room 163C)

9:00–10:30am

Why Rain Gardens and Bioretention Facilities Fail and Tools for Success

Steven Torgerson, *AMT Landscape Architecture and Design Division*

Rain impacts each of our lives. Past generations developed methods that quickly whisk the rain from roofs, roads, and plazas on its journey to the ocean. The contemporary stormwater model features the design and installation of landscapes that mimic nature, capturing, storing, and infiltrating the water close to its source. Rain gardens and bioretention facilities are two practices in the green infrastructure toolbox, and they are often the first choices for designers, contractors, public agencies, and landowners due to their relatively low cost, large stormwater treatment capacity, and perceived ease of installation. However, complaints ranging from unsightly weedy holes to mosquito-breeding water can leave agencies and landowners wishing for another stormwater alternative. With appropriate planning, design, construction, and maintenance, these stormwater treatment workhorses can be an artistic part of our landscapes, gardens, streetscapes, and public spaces.

11:00am–12:30pm

Field Notes: A Holistic Guide for the Modern Land Steward

Trevor Smith, *Land Escapes Design*

Trevor Smith has taken his 20 years of field experience as a regenerative landscape designer and entrepreneur and compiled *Field Notes* that offer a unique approach to land care. Part professional development, part personal development, *Field Notes* takes a stripped-down look at the human element in the landscape. Through personal stories and observations of hundreds of installed projects, Mr. Smith covers a broad range of topics, including regenerative design, green infrastructure, adaptive strategies in the face of climate change, the importance of maintaining your own health and well being, and ways to challenge the norms in pursuit of authentic results.

2:00–3:30pm

What's Growing on at Monticello?

Creating a 21st-century Model for Diversified, Experimental Agriculture, and Land Stewardship on Thomas Jefferson's Land

Keith Nevison, *Thomas Jefferson Foundation at Monticello*

Big changes are coming soon to Monticello! In the years ahead, we are developing an innovative farming center highlighting Thomas Jefferson's connection to food, farming, and civic agriculture. Learn about our goal of connecting guests to a national farm model for regenerative agriculture, a landscape that simultaneously supports diverse crop enterprises and ecological restoration goals. Monticello Center for Food and Farming will involve academic partnerships and public programming to educate people on the challenges and opportunities facing American agriculture today. A major focus will consider how Jefferson's horticultural pursuits and experiments in the garden have relevance to issues faced today, from addressing climate change to promoting native plants and healthy habitats.

4:00–5:30pm

The Challenges and Complexities of Ecological Gardens: A 5-year Journal of Discoveries

Lori Silvia, *St. George's School*

Take a five year photographic journey through one of the largest ecological and bio-diverse built landscapes in Rhode Island: St. George's School. Ms. Silvia will share the process, challenges, and discoveries she has made while managing concept, design, installation, plants, and daily maintenance of the landscape. Broader philosophical questions regarding the landscapes' evolution will also be considered. Ms. Silvia's passion for and dedication to this project will be obvious and honest, and her photographs will reflect her intimate daily involvement throughout the entire process of developing St. George's landscape.



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IDEA EXCHANGES (Room 162)

9:00–10:30am

Adaptation for an Unpredictable Future – Can Plants Meet the Challenge?

Moderator: Mark Richardson

Panelists: Michael Piantedosi, Uli Lorimer, and TBD

What do plants need to survive not just for the next season or two, but for successive years that may be characterized by the extreme variability of changing climate. Find out whether there are genetic modifications, grower interventions, and resiliency strategies for designed landscapes that will result in plants and plantings destined to survive the test of time.

11:00am–12:30pm

Native Plants: Sourcing, Establishing, Maintaining

Moderator: Heather Heimarck

Panelists: Geovani Aguilar, Marie Chieppo, Dan Jaffe, John Kinchla, Darryl Newman, and Theresa Sprague

As we extol the virtues of native plants, how do we ensure a positive experience for the client who invests in native material? Representing native plant propagators, growers, and designers, our panelists consider strategies for success with native plants from selecting the right species, to optimizing conditions for establishment in the landscape, to managing long-term maintenance.

2:00–3:30pm

Enhancing the Edibility of Northeast Landscapes with Native Species

Russ Cohen & Georgia Hann

Edible plants heighten enjoyment of every landscape, and their edible characteristics can provide a powerful incentive for people to plant them. Learn to identify native edible plants and discover the benefits accrued from making room for edibles. Discover the comestible qualities of at least two dozen species of edible wild plants native to the ecoregions of the Northeast. Mr. Cohen and Ms. Hann will provide keys to the identification of each species, along with descriptions of edible portions, seasons of availability, preparation methods, and guidelines for safe and environmentally responsible foraging. Samples of foraged goodies made from edible native species will be available for tasting. (This session taught in conjunction with the next session in this room.)

4:00–5:30pm

Propagating Native Edible Plants from Seed and Adding Them to Landscapes – a Hands-on Session

Russ Cohen & Georgia Hann

Try your hand at sowing and processing native seed for local edibles and take home your freshly-potted seeds. Learn techniques for successful propagation from Mr. Cohen and Ms. Hann who share their expertise in collecting or otherwise obtaining seeds, storing seeds, sowing, and growing seeds into larger plants. They will also discuss how to determine which species are appropriate to plant in which locations and provide advice to help ensure the survival of the plants once planted. Samples of foraged goodies made from edible native species will be available for tasting. [This session limited to 35 hands-on participants and taught in conjunction with the previous session in this room. Others may observe.]