

PLANT PROFILE



Mature Black Locusts: Silhouettes, leafy canopy, and trunk bark



Photos copyright © 2015 by Robert Dirig



Black Locust Trees A Slightly Controversial Topic by Akiva Silver

BLACK LOCUST (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) is a tree that is both hated and loved. On one side of the fence are people who say that Black Locust is a horribly invasive species. On the other side, folks say Black Locust is a miracle tree with endless uses and ecological services. In the middle, you will find Black Locust itself, as a post holding up the fence.

Originally, Black Locust was native to central Appalachia and the Ozark Mountains. It has spread from these locations, and is now found naturalized in every continental state, in several Canadian provinces, and in parts of Europe. It is most often found growing in disturbed sites, old fields, vacant lots, and on roadsides.

Growth

Black Locust is an incredibly fast-growing tree. It is able to form relationships in the soil with bacteria that fix atmospheric nitrogen. This ability allows Black Locust to grow in very poor soils, so long as they are out in the sunshine, and the ground is not water-logged.

I have seen Black Locusts grow 6 feet in their first year of life (though 2-3 feet is more typical for starting from seed). Established Locusts that are cut down can put on as much as 10 feet of re-growth the following year. Within a 20-year span, Black Locusts are often big enough for small-diameter lumber. This is a tree that doesn't take a lot of time to grow.

It is also a tree that will spread and form large colonies. Rarely do we see a single Black Locust trunk. They send out runners and sprout up endlessly until they reach shade or a barrier (road, water, lawn, etc.). Many Black Locust colonies are several acres in extent.

Ecological Niche

Black Locusts will stampede out into a field or old gravel pit, or anywhere that things have been opened up for them. They are a pioneer species that will not become established in a forest.

This Locust casts a very light shade (*see leafy canopy photo, page 1*). The leaves are made up of small oval leaflets that allow a tremendous amount of light to pass through. The shade created by Black Locusts is so weak that undergrowth is always rampant beneath them. Most stands of Black Locust include tangles of honeysuckles (*Lonicera* spp.) and Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*). Where exotic shrubs do not dominate the understory, hardwood tree seedlings find an excellent place to become established. The light shade offers protection, while the Locust trees improve the soil through their nitrogen fixation and easily compostable leaf litter.

Black Locusts are short-lived trees. Because of their shallow root system, they typically start falling over by the time they reach 60+ years old. By this time, an abundance of hardwood seedlings has become established in the understory and will be ready to take over.

Seed production of Black Locusts begins early and can be heavy. The trees produce pea-shaped pods containing a row of small hard seeds. These edible seeds, with their durable seed coat, can remain dormant in the soil for decades. Perhaps they are waiting for the next forest disturbance to sprout. The seed pods flutter off in the wind, but they do not travel very far.

Flowering

Strings of white (at times with a slight lavender undertone), yellow-blotched, pea-like flowers hang over the trees, as if they are covered in robes of blossoms in late spring. Stands of Black Locust can be seen from very far away during this time of year. The flowers are edible and delicious; I think they taste just like peas. They are a special treat for only about a week every year.

Honey Bees and many other pollinating insects flock to these fragrant blossoms in great numbers. Black Locust is considered an important nectar flow by most beekeepers.

Mature leaves (top), flowers, and seed pods were photographed in Ithaca, N. Y. The branch with fresh leaves is from a native Black Locust in W. V.





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Wood

This is where Black Locust really stands out and makes a name for itself. Despite its rapid growth rate, Black Locust produces a very dense hardwood. Black Locust is an excellent firewood; it burns hotter than oak or maple. It can be cut over and over because of its ability to grow back from the stump. Many people have been experimenting with putting Black Locust on coppice rotations for fuel wood, in which the trees are harvested every seven years.

Locust is not just an excellent wood for burning, it is also incredibly rot-resistant. It will easily outlast White Oak (*Quercus alba*), and triple the lifespan of pressure-treated (P.T.) lumber. P.T. lumber is wood that is infused with chemicals at high pressure to keep it from rotting. The resultant wood is used for picnic tables, playgrounds, fence posts, and decks. P.T. lumber is considered highly toxic, and has been linked to cancers and environmental pollution. Black Locust is a natural superior alternative to P.T. lumber. Every outbuilding on my farm (including the porch) is built with Black Locust posts for footers.

The wood is not only strong enough to use for vehicle bridges (as is done in some parts of Europe), but it is also a beautiful hardwood with a dark orange-brown color. It has found its way into furniture, cutting boards, and musical instruments.

It is important to note that it is the *inner heartwood of Black Locust that is rotresistant*, not the outer ring of white sapwood.

Propagation

Black Locust can be started either from seed or from root cuttings.

The seeds have a very tough coat. This allows them to remain dormant in the soil for several years, until conditions are ripe for growth (usually after a massive disturbance). This coat must be weakened for the seeds to sprout. You can either abrade each seed with a file or use a hot water treatment. If using the latter, bring a pot of water to a boil and then take it off the heat. Drop the seeds into the hot water and let them soak for 12-24 hours.

Growing Black Locust from root cuttings is used to propagate superior clones. There are breeding programs in the USDA, in Hungary, and among individuals to select outstanding, timber-producing Black Locusts. Typical wild Black Locusts will often have twisty trunks. People have been searching for and breeding trees with arrow-straight growth. To clone these trees, root cuttings are the preferred method. Start at the base of the tree, look for a root flare, and carefully follow it until roots as thick as your thumb are found. These roots can be cut into 2" sections and planted in pots or in a nursery bed. Root cuttings are best taken when the trees are dormant.

Is Black Locust Native or Invasive?

If the definition of invasive is a plant that is able to naturalize outside of its native range, then yes, Black

Top: Spiny branches on a Black Locust sprout in an old field. *Center:* A pole barn the author built with Black Locust timbers. *Bottom:* Terraces built on author's farm, using Black Locust slab wood.











Locust is certainly invasive. However, if we look at the ecological effects of Black Locust, we see a different story.

For the most part, invasive plants have negative effects on the environment for two reasons: They crowd out native species, thereby limiting diversity, and they are not fed on by native insects, creating biological dead zones. Black Locust fits into neither of these roles.

It does not crowd out other native trees the way Norway Maple (Acer platanoides) or Tree of Heaven (Ailanthus altissima) does. In fact, Black Locust actually improves conditions for native hardwoods, in a fashion similar to that of another pioneer species, Quaking Aspen (Populus tremuloides).

Black Locust **leaves** are fed upon by a lot of insects (*see two, left panel*), the flowers are used by many native pollinators, and even the wood is bored into by the native Locust Borer (*Megacyllene robiniae*, Cerambycidae, *bottom left*).

In upstate New York, Black Locust has not traveled that far to find a home. Other species that are regularly considered native here, but arrived from a similar distance, include Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*), Carolina Silverbell (*Halesia carolina*), Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*), Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*), Vernal Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis vernalis*), Fringe Tree (*Chionanthus virginicus*), and Sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*). Redbuds escape cultivation almost everywhere they are planted in central New York, but they have not received the negative attention that Black Locust has.

Rather than simply looking at the native range of a plant to determine if it is beneficial or harmful, I prefer to look at the ecological impact of a species. From what I have seen, Black Locust is a wonderful tree that is able to grow in the most abused landscapes, such as abandoned gravel pits and strip mines. It is useful to wildlife, native plant communities, and people.

If we are to pursue ecological solutions to the problems we face, then Black Locust can be a key player. It is an outstanding soil improver, biomass producer, source of nectar, and high quality, renewable timber. Black Locust belongs in the hedgerow of every farm that uses fence posts or beams. It can be cut again and again. Black Locust will never complain about abuse, either to itself or to the land base; it will always respond with rapid growth and curtains of white blossoms. We can label Black Locust as an invasive plant, or we can recognize it as an ally on our path to a healthier world.

Note: Since this article was first written, Black Locust has been labeled an invasive species by the State of New York. Our nursery, as well as any other, must inform customers purchasing Black Locust trees that they are dangerous to the environment, and should not be planted next to "natural areas." I believe that the whole world matters, not just "natural areas," and that Black Locust can benefit the ecological and human needs of the world. I wonder how many of the legislators who labeled Black Locust this way have ever observed the tree first-hand.

Akiva Silver, Twisted Tree Farm, 279 Washburn Rd., Spencer, NY 14883. (607) 589-7937. www.twisted-tree.net.

INSECT LARVAL ASSOCIATES OF BLACK LOCUST include a large moth, the Clouded Locust Underwing (Euparthenos nubilis, top), and the Silver-spotted Skipper (Epargyreus clarus, four center photos), which eat the leaflets; and a striking cerambycid beetle, the Locust Borer (Megacyllene robiniae, bottom), which bores in the wood. The Skipper's colorful caterpillar hides inside a nest on the twigs. [See Solidago 15(3):10, Sept. 2014, for images of this insect on Amorpha fruticosa.]

Solidago Newsletter of the

Newsletter of the Finger Lakes Native Plant Society

Volume 16, No. 4

December 2015

Published quarterly at Ithaca, New York, USA.

To receive a colored version when *Solidago* is published, please ask Arich Tal to join our e-mail distribution list. Each colored version will also be posted on our website (*www.flnps.org*) after the next issue is produced.

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THE FINGER LAKES NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY STEERING COMMITTEE

Krissy Boys: Projects (Chair)

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Please Contribute to Solidago

WE WELCOME CONTRIBUTIONS THAT FEATURE WILD PLANTS OF THE FINGER LAKES REGION OF N.Y. We include cryptogams (bryophytes, lichens, fungi, and algae) as "flora," and recognize that green plants provide habitats and substrates for these and many animals, especially insects. We are interested in zoological associations as long as plants are an integral part of the story.

We can use a wide spectrum of material in a variety of writing styles. Our regular columns include the NAME THAT **PLANT CONTEST** (identifying a mystery plant from images), LOCAL FLORA (plant lists from special sites), OUTINGS (reports of FLNPS-sponsored excursions), and PLANT PROFILES (on specific local plants). We also occasionally publish APPRECIATIONS (memorials to local botanists and naturalists), Reviews (of books, talks, workshops, nurseries), LETTERS (commentaries and letters to the editor), Essays (on botanical themes), VERSE (haiku, sonnets, and poems of less formal structure), ART (botanical illustrations, plant designs, pencil sketches, decorations), and **Photographs** (stand-alone images, photo essays, and full-page composite plates, or originals that can be scanned & returned). We also can always use FILLERS (very short notes, small images, cartoons) for the last few inches of a column.

Colored images in the online version will be converted into black and white before printing paper copies for mailing.

Name That Plant Contest

The photo from last issue's NAME THAT PLANT CONTEST [Solidago 16(3): p. 8] was of Low **Bindweed** (*Calystegia spithamaea*). It is a fairly rare plant in central New York, and it is often small and easily overlooked, especially when it is not in flower. When in bloom, it is quite impressive, with flowers proportionally big for such a small plant. Otherwise, Low Bindweed's flowers are similar to the weedy Hedge Bindweed (Calystegia sepium), which is very common in disturbed habitats, including urban areas. I realized the Low Bindweed could be challenging to identify from the photo, but due to its beauty, I thought I would present it anyway. Thanks to all those who entered the contest, and congratulations to the winners:

BOB DIRIG, KEN HULL, SUSANNE LORBEER, and ROSEMARIE PARKER.



THIS ISSUE'S MYSTERY PLANT IS SHOWN ABOVE. This species can easily blend into its surroundings, making it sometimes hard to find. Fall, winter, and early spring can be a good time to try and find this species, since it does not die back in winter. But in late fall, the leaf often turns from green to purplish-brown or bronze. *Hints and suggestions are often provided to contest participants who try.* Common and/or scientific names are acceptable. More than one guess is allowed. Please submit your answers to

DAVID WERIER (*Nakita@lightlink.com*).

The photograph was taken by David Werier on 19 October 2015 in Passaic Co., N. J.

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Dear Mr. Dirig,

I am a newish member of FLNPS. Attached is a picture I took of *Spiranthes lucida* (Shining Lady's Tresses). I love orchids, and was excited to find about ten of these beauties.

I had agreed to do an aquatic plant survey in the Finger Lakes National Forest this past June. Most of the ponds that we were looking at were old cow-watering holes that were still being used for that purpose. We were walking over to a pond, and I happened to look down and saw little white flowers in the grass. I had found orchids in a cow field! I would have never guessed this would be the correct environment for orchids.

Julia Miller Ithaca, email of 11 November 2015

Spiranthes lucida has a nice yellow patch on the lip, and early flowering date. It is localized but not really rare in the Finger Lakes Region. It generally prefers highly calcareous sites, including rivulets in fens, but can grow in other types of habitats too. — David Werier, 11 November 2015



Letters

Loved It!!

I just looked [on the *flnps.org* website] at some of the posted issues of your newsletter *Solidago*. Most, most impressive! I can't say enough nice things about it. Many adjectives come to mind: superlative, professional, beautiful, plus well written; aims at a wonderful cross-section of folks, magnificent photography, and so it goes. One of the best newsletters I've ever seen....

Don H. Miller

Prof. Emeritus, Vermont State Colleges, Williston, Vermont, email of 7 October 2015

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Hi Bob,

Thanks to you and the Finger Lakes Native Plant Society for the knowledge, monitoring, and care you provide to our natural (and not so natural) environment and the people who live within it.

> Mary Weiss-Andersson Ithaca, N.Y. email of 18 Nov. 2015 5008

Thank You!

MANY THANKS to all who have contributed to *Solidago* in 2015! For Volume 16, No. 4, we thank WRITERS Krissy Boys, Rick Lightbody, Don H. Miller, Julia Miller, Rosemarie Parker, Akiva Silver, Anna Stalter, Mary Weiss-Andersson, David Werier, & Colleen Wolpert, whose contributions made this issue special. CALENDAR ITEMS and ANNOUNCEMENTS were organized by Rosemarie Parker. ILLUSTRATIONS were loaned by Akiva Silver (p. 3, *center & bottom*), David Werier & Julia Miller (p. 6), Colleen Wolpert (p. 7), Krissy Boys & Robert Wesley (pp. 8-9), Norm Trigoboff & Annie Wall (p. 10, *faces*), Anna Stalter (P. 10, *bottom*), and Robert Dirig (pp.1-2, 3 (*top*), 4 (*center, E. clarus*), 5, 10 (*leaf background*), & 11-12). On p. 4, *E. nubilis* images are from Wm. Barnes & J. McDunnough's (1918) "Illustrations of the North American Species of the Genus *Catocala*," *Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History*, New Series, Volume III, Part I, Plate VII, Nos. 1-2; and the drawing of *M. robiniae* is from "Locust Borer," pp. 93-97, Plate 5, No. 3, in *Insects Affecting Park and Woodland Trees*, by E. P. Felt (1905), N.Y.S. Museum Memoir No. 8, Volume I. SPECIAL THANKS to David Werier & Robert Wesley for technical assistance with botanical details. LAYOUT & DESIGN by the Editor; PROOFREADING by Rosemarie Parker & Susanne Lorbeer.

BEST WISHES to FLNPS members (and all others in our reading audience) for pleasant Holidays and a botanically exciting New Year!

- Robert Dirig



New at the Mundy Wildflower Garden: Native Plant Restoration of *The Gabions* Area by Krissy Boys

PLANS FOR THIS NEW GARDEN began four years ago, when we realized that an infestation of Crown Vetch (Coronilla varia), an invasive and aggressive weed, had to be eradicated from an area in the Mundy Wildflower Garden called "the gabions" (heavygauge wire baskets filled with rocks stacked on top of one another, rising vertically out of the creek, used to control erosion and flooding, Fig. 1). In place of chemical pesticides, we decided to do this by using heavy-duty landscape fabric secured to the ground with long metal staples (Fig. 2). Three years later, enough time had passed that we expected to find a weed-free site underneath. As we were about to lift the fabric and begin planting, we discovered a problem: the top run of gabion baskets was collapsing. Knowing this needed to be addressed, we contacted Cornell engineers to come and assess the site. Their answer was difficult to hear: Heavy equipment was needed to remove a course of baskets and re-grade the entire site. Oh! But, please no! ... we did not want to disturb the surface, and thus the weedy seedbank; nonetheless it had to be done.

To assure the re-graded surface would be weed-free as previously planned, the Cornell Grounds Dept. finished the area with a thick (4-6 inch) layer of gravel that was carefully chosen from deep inside a mine. The gravel was selected for two reasons: This deep glacial deposit had not been exposed to seed populations for about 12,000 years, and therefore is free of weed seeds; and this particular vein of gravel is of small size allowing plants' roots to knit into it.

Satisfied with the substrate, we commenced to plant throughout the spring and summer of this year. Plants *can* grow in soil-less gravel; in fact, they grew well. A few precocious specimens flowered and set seeds this first season. Along with plugs (plants grown in pots or trays), seeds were spread by hand directly on the surface and they germinated and grew into robust first year rosettes (*Fig. 3*).

In describing the site, there are good design elements, as well as wonderful plants, to point out. Native grasses and sedges are used throughout as the dominant species. They are planted in wide bands, following a serpentine pattern running with the creek. Beginning in spring, the cool-season native grasses, my favorites, our very own Wild Ryes — Virginia (Elymus virginicus), Riparian (E. riparius), and Bottle Brush (E. hystrix) — are the stars of restoration plantings. They move as one in the breeze while highlighted by pink Wild Geraniums (Geranium maculatum), red Wild Columbines (Aquilegia canadensis), yellow Golden Alexanders (Zizia aurea), and the lavender and purple flowers of the tiniest Penstemons (Penstemon hirsutus). These are inter-planted with two of the shortest, toughest plants, Shaved Sedge (*Carex tonsa*) and Ivory Sedge (C. eburnea). This grouping matures to a couple of feet for the grasses and forbs, and just a few inches for the sedges. Look closely between your feet for these beauties!

Solidago 16(4), December 2015

In mid-season, the warm-season grasses, Big and Little Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii* and *Schizachyrium scoparium*, respectively), Switch Grass (*Panicum virgatum*), Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), and Deer-tongue Grass (*Dichanthelium clandestinum*), will be upright and tall against the summer's heat and prevailing westerly winds, combining their texture with the hot bold colors of Black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia hirta, R. triloba, R. speciosa*), the false sun-flower (*Heliopsis helianthoides*), and tall, really tall, never toppling, Giant Hyssop (*Agastache nepetoides*). This group was placed low on the slope towards the creek to avoid obscuring your view when looking at the waterfall upstream (*Fig. 4*).

The flowering and interest these plants provide is evident all year, but autumn could be the best time to appreciate the goldenrods, asters, and grasses. Gray and Bi-colored Goldenrods (Solidago nemoralis & S. bicolor, respectively), singly arching and straight, their stems covered in tiny flowers, stand ever gracefully beside the rare, pungent Mountain Mint (Pycnanthemum muticum) and the common Calico Aster (Symphiotrichum lateriflorum) — a miracle woven every fall as hundreds of small bright flowers persist through the morning frosts. This is why we call them "Frost Asters," just one of their common names. They are brightened more so in combination with the fall colors of the native grasses, whose stems and leaves are bronzed in copper, gold, beige, taupe, red, and purple. On top of all this, a few weeks later, is another perfectly wondrous sight: the ripening seeds showing off their particular colors in white, cream, or buff. It is so easy to see these plant combinations as the perfect dried flower arrangement. They are a living tapestry, a full display of texture, color, and leaf patterns; all this for our sore eyes to feast on as fall moves a little closer to winter. Then a bird appears on the scene, grasps the stem of a goldenrod or aster, and begins feeding on its seeds. These plants provide a nutritious meal for American Goldfinches, White-crowned Sparrows, and other small birds. Birds fuel up on them late in the year, before travelling long distances south, and the seeds continue to provide meals for overwintering species. We do not cut them down to the ground; their flowers are now seeds, their stems and leaves may have butterfly eggs or larvae. They are as essential to wildlife's success each winter as woodpiles and root cellars were for us before delivered gas and grocery stores.

Visit *The Gabions* area and the new planting as it matures, to make discoveries for your gardens, remembering these plants need few inputs like water, fertilizer, and pesticides, yet provide so much for the larger community of animals, insects, and people.

The **MUNDY WILDFLOWER GARDEN** *GABIONS* **AREA** is a place to make natural history discoveries. On any day it could be a large Snapping Turtle in the sun on a boulder in the middle of the creek, a Mink rock-hopping while looking for crayfish, a Belted Kingfisher calling as it dives for fish in mid-stream, a Great Blue Heron standing and waiting patiently for fish, a young turtle, crayfish, or insects. Maybe it will be a dragonfly, damselfly, or the amazing Eastern Dob-



4. Waterfall in Fall Creek, on the upstream end of "the gabions," in autumn. (Figures 1-2 by Krissy Boys, Figures 3-4 by Robert Wesley.)

sonfly beginning or ending their life cycles. There could be a Common Merganser, or Mallard Ducks flying in for a landing on the water; a Red-tailed Hawk, Osprey, or Bald Eagle soaring above.

The Mundy Wildflower Garden borders a protected waterway, Fall Creek. It is in *Forest Home*, an historic community near Cornell University, and within Cornell Plantations — a botanic garden, arboretum, and thousands of acres of natural areas. Come see it in each season of the year, and explore a myriad of places to be with and enjoy plants, insects, animals, and people.

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I thank the following people for support and assistance with this project, and to the entire garden, over time: Rosemarie Parker: for so much help in all phases, but especially the design phase. This new planting would not be a success without Rosemarie's design, the stick and the spray paint to keep me on track. Robert Wesley: always happy to guide us with plant selection, as well as walking with me into the gravel pit to choose the vein of stone. Cornell Grounds Department: for their extreme level of care and expertise on a sensitive site, in a garden, with heavy equipment. Thank You! Todd Bittner: for support throughout, and much work with the Cornell Engineers, Cornell Grounds Department, and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. Bruce Sternberg, Jules Hojnowski, David Keifer, Jean Gerow, Gloria Kulhawy, Tamara Lovell, Barbara Nussbaum, Pat Pingle, Marge Scerbo, Paul Schmitt, Janice Bretscher, Sally Woodmansee, Debbie Reisiger, Linda Blossom, Barbara Moyer, and Mary Squyres (MUNDY WILDFLOWER GARDEN VOLUNTEERS): for collecting, cleaning and sowing seeds, and many hours of planting and weeding. Betsy Crispell: for collecting seeds from wild and remote places in Tompkins, Tioga, and Cortland Counties. Susanne Lorbeer: for keeping track of all these plants in and out of bloom, and recording and posting this each week! Missy Bidwell (Greenhouse Manager): for care of seedlings and plugs. *Plantations Horticulture Staff:* for watering seedlings and plug trays in the nursery twice a day for months. CORNELL PLANTATIONS NATURAL AREAS STEWARDS: Jules Ginenthal, Mike Roberts, and Zeb Strickland: for hours of dividing and planting; Daniel Jablansky (Mundy Wildflower Garden Intern) for tirelessly planting hundreds of tiny plugs and watering for days on end; and Casey Fitzpatrick and Rachel Wallace (CORNELL NATURAL AREAS INTERNS): for planting almost as many tiny plugs as Daniel Jablansky. - Krissv Bovs

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Faces in the Forest!

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These enigmatic sylvan personalities were encountered by Annie Wall (*upper right*) and Norm Trigoboff (*the others*) in Finger Lakes woodlands. The two on the left appear to be Pileated Woodpecker sculpturing; the rest are apparent knotholes, where limbs have rotted out of older wood. Can you hear them knock, yawn, howl, shriek, and whistle?

The L.H. Bailey Hortorium Herbarium Needs YOU!

The Bailey Hortorium at Cornell University holds an 875,000-specimen herbarium collection that reflects the interests and activities of many faculty, students, and community members over its nearly 150-year history. We are currently working through a large specimen backlog, checking the collection for duplicates, making new labels, and ultimately adding new botanical treasures to our holdings. Volunteers are needed to help transcribe data from specimen labels, photograph herbarium sheets, and prepare new specimens. Imagine transcribing the label of an 1894 collection of *Trillium undulatum* from McLean Bog, or photographing a specimen of *Yucca angustissima* from Utah. Volunteer at BH and help us preserve botanical history! No experience is necessary; we'll provide the training. If you think you might enjoy working behind the scenes in a world-class herbarium, contact Anna

607-255-1052) today! Photo: Current volunteers Rosemarie Parker & Susanne Lorbeer at the Hortorium Herbarium.



Annual Solstice Gathering Is December 16th ! by Rosemarie Parker

It's time again to relax, as we share experiences and expertise. Please plan on attending and participating. We will be at our usual meeting location in the Unitarian Church Annex on East Buffalo Street in Ithaca, N.Y.

Our annual SEED EXCHANGE is part of the festivities. A list of seeds we already have is included with this mailing. Please get in touch with me (or at *info@flnps.org*) if you have native plant seeds to offer, and want a photo included on our board. Remember, you can take seeds to plant, whether or not you bring any. Even if you have no more room in your garden, the Gathering is the perfect time to decide what you want to grow for FLNPS to sell at the Spring Plant Sale — many species require a cold, moist, stratification period before they will germinate.

The plants we use to decorate the room for the Gathering give us materials for an **IDENTIFY-THE-DECORATIONS** "QUIZ." This is always fun, as well as educational, and we expect people to collaborate. You don't need to get any of the answers right to qualify for the **DOOR PRIZE DRAWING**. It's always fun to have some new and different species for the quiz. Please notify me if you want to bring plant material for this activity.

Every year, **DOOR PRIZES** are donated by members. If you would like to contribute in this way, again, please let me know *early*, so we know how many to expect. We may save some for the January Members' Night!

To keep up our energy during all these activities, we ask everybody to bring some FOOD WITH A NATIVE ELEMENT, and a prize is awarded to the creator of the food voted favorite by the most participants. You can think "outside the box" here. Besides the all-time popular blueberry, cranberry and apple dishes, there are many possible ingredients, from native plants like Black Walnuts, Butternuts, maple syrup, Elderberries, Wild Rice, mushrooms, quinoa, squash, peppers, corn, and potatoes (a Meso-American origin is okay). *Creativity and truly local ingredients are appreciated*.

Finally, we always need help with SET UP and CLEAN UP, and I am the person to contact if you want to volunteer for either.

Our annual Solstice Gathering is fun and friendly. Please come and enjoy the plants and plant-loving people!

Please note that the traditional **MEMBERS' SLIDE SHOW** that was formerly included in the Solstice Gathering is now part of the annual **MEMBERS' NIGHT**, which will take place in January 2016 (*see details on the next page*). If you know that you will be participating in January, please let **RICK** LIGHTBODY know, at





Winterberry (Ilex verticillata) & Partridgeberry (Mitchella repens)



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Finger Lakes Native Plant Society Photo Talks & Activitics, Late Autumn 2015 ~ Winter 2016

2015 Solstice Gathering

Wed., Dec. 16th, 7:00-9:00 p.m., Unitarian Church Annex, East Buffalo Street, Ithaca, N.Y.

Pot luck of dishes with native or naturalized plant ingredients (People's Choice Prize) • Winter Plant ID contest with door prizes (collaborate, use the field guides, just have fun and learn) • Seed exchange and give-away: locally collected seed of ca. 100 species, take a pinch to try, or bring some to share (please label species, location, collection date, and collect responsibly, with permission). Same place as our monthly talks. More details on p. 11.

Upcoming Talks, 2016: Feb. 17: Joseph McMullen & Catherine Landis, From Dresden to Dryden: The Life and Times of Frederick Pursh. March 16: George Hudler, Magical Mushrooms, Mischievous Molds. April 20: Arieh Tal, Wild Violets of New York. May 18: Chris Foito & Panel, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid — Film and Local Intervention Efforts.

FLNPS talks are held on the third Wednesday of the month at the Unitarian Church Annex (second floor) on E. Buffalo St. in Ithaca, N.Y., beginning at 7:00 p.m. Please watch www.flnps.org for details and updates. January 20 — Wednesday — 7:00 p.m. FLNPS MEMBERS' NIGHT, coordinated by Rick Lightbody, Unitarian Church Annex.

Judging by the substantial feedback we received from last year's first-ever FLNPS Members' Night, the event was quite a success. Attendees enjoyed the variety of presentations and the chance to learn about their fellow members' interests and talents. So we'll do it again this coming January. And of course we'll need your help! If you like to take photos, paint, draw, write poetry (or read the poems of others), do needlepoint, sing and play music, tell stories, or do anything else with a plant-related theme that you think others might enjoy, please come and share your talents and enthusiasm with us. The more participation we have, the more fun this evening will be. Rick Lightbody will again be coordinating the program and making sure there's time to fit everything in. Please let Rick know of your interest and intentions as soon as possible. If you expect your presentation to run longer than 5 minutes, please contact Rick by January 2nd; if less than 5 minutes, by January 12th, at

com. If you don't wish to do a presentation (or even if you do), you can bring interesting, plant-related art, crafts, and found objects to be included on the display table. We'll also have a silent auction again this year, so think about what you might contribute; and bring your checkbook so you can bid on cool stuff and help our organization. For more details about Members' Night, and a link to a nice review of last year's event, see

http://flnps.org/activities/937/members-night

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FLNPS Is Now on Facebook!

Since its inception in 1997, the Finger Lakes Native Plant Society has endeavored to provide its members with information and news about the flora of our region. The means by which we do that has changed over the years. Our newsletter *Solidago* is now produced in full color and delivered via e-mail. Our website (*flnps.org*) features enhanced content and important announcements. In the spirit of keeping current and reaching out to members and interested parties far and wide, the "Finger Lakes Native Plant Society" now has a Facebook page! Would you like to share a striking photo of fall foliage, or do you need help identifying a composite growing in your yard? Ask your FLNPS Facebook friends!

We hope members will enjoy using this social platform for instant sharing of content with countless others with an interest in Finger Lakes flora. "Like us" on Facebook!