



Founded in 1997.
Logo art of Tall Goldenrod,
Solidago altissima,
by Nat Cleavitt, 2006.

Solidago

Newsletter of the
Finger Lakes Native Plant Society

Volume 27, No. 2

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June 2026

LOCAL FLORA

Unusual Leaves on Red-osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*)

Photographed by Charles R. Smith on 21 May 2026



The shrub grew at LABRADOR HOLLOW UNIQUE AREA, in Onondaga County, New York. This cluster of leaves struck me as especially artistic and beautiful. They were only on one branch of the dogwood. I've never seen anything like it, and wonder if it results from a fungus, or virus, or something else. Can anyone in our reading audience explain what might cause a pattern like this in Nature?

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REPORT

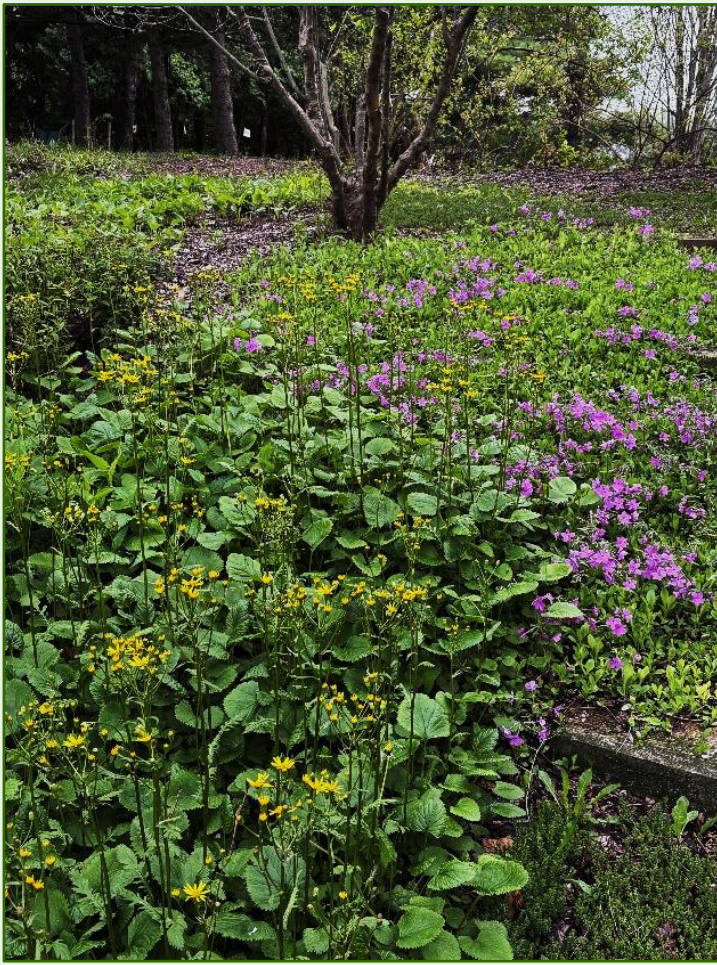
Native Garden Tour – Spring 2026

by Rosemarie Parker

Two wonderful gardens were on the tour this spring. I am sorry for those who missed the opportunity to see them. I offer sincere thanks to both gardeners for their willingness to offer their yards and time to FLNPS. An attempt to show some of what you missed follows.

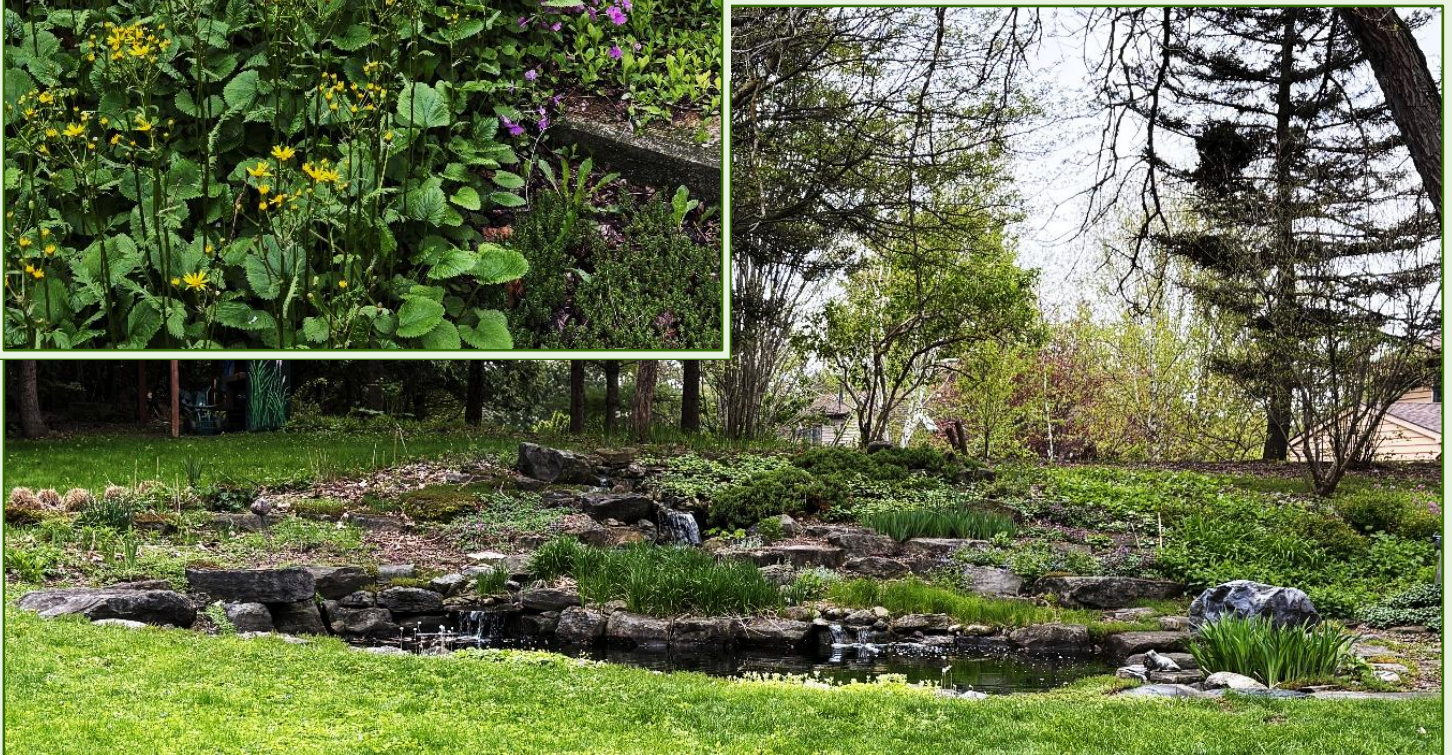


First was Kathy McGraff's suburban garden in Fayetteville. In a half-acre she has replaced large areas of non-native groundcovers (lots of *Vinca*) and perennials with native alternatives. The results are wonderful, and clearly still a work in progress, as new areas are re-envisioned. The photos below do not do justice to the species diversity, but give a glimpse of the successful transformation. I failed to get a photo of the shade garden, but it was also lush and diverse. Kudos!



Left: Large swaths of *Packera aurea* and *Phlox stolonifera* under trees and shrubs on a slight slope.

Below: A pre-existing water feature surrounded with non-native ground covers is now a collection of native sedges, iris, *Polemonium reptans*, *Sedum ternatum*, *Anaphalis* (Pearly Everlasting), Pussytoes (*Antennaria*), Green & Gold (*Chrysogonum*), *Geum rivale*, asters, and shade-tolerant goldenrods.



The second garden was John Gilrein's semi-rural property in the Town of Onondaga. In two acres with sloped topography, he has habitats ranging from dry rock garden slopes, through horticultural beds incorporating many native species, to wetland gardens and finally wet natural woodlands at the bottom of the hill. He has had 40 years to convert "prairie like landscape" to a really amazing property, moving stones and building trails and planting trees. A few highlights can only give a glimpse of the property.

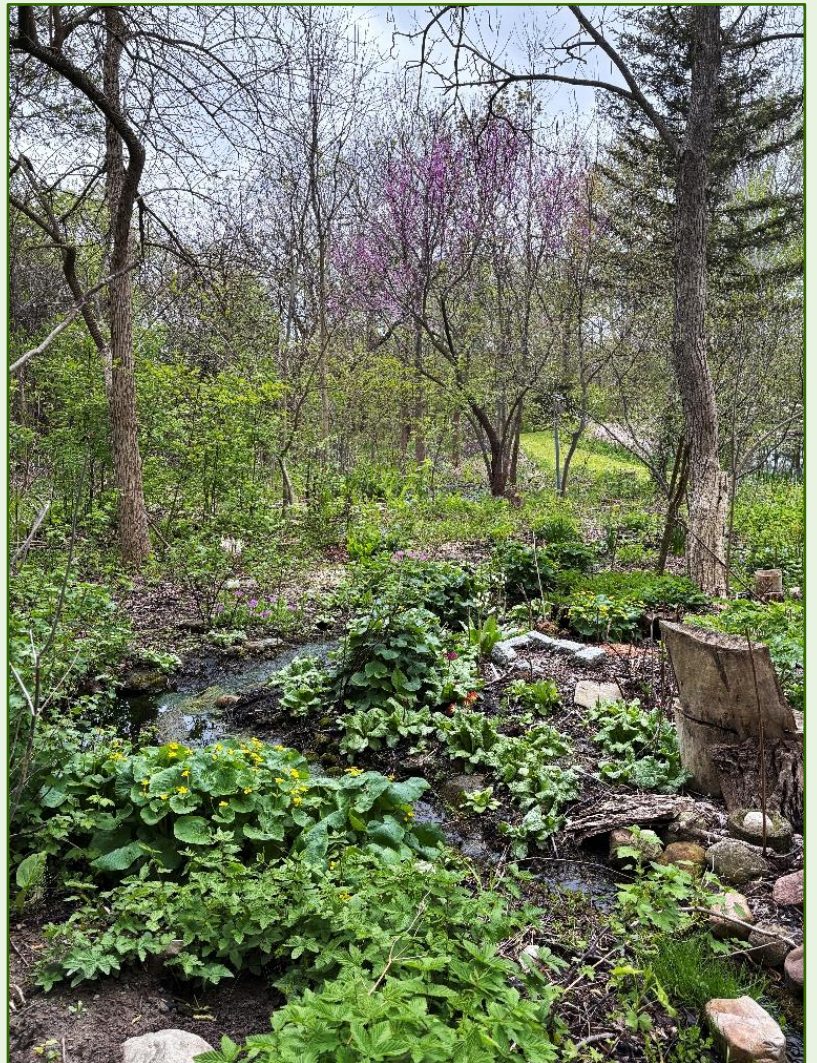


Above: On a hillside of varied handmade troughs holding diminutive alpine plants was this charming white form of Quaker Ladies (*Houstonia caerulea*) and native Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*). A great way to grow *Houstonia* for those of us without the right conditions on the ground.

Right: Streamside beds of *Geum rivale* (Water Avens), Primrose species, including *Primula meadia* (Shooting Star, ex-*Dodecatheon*), *Caltha palustris* (Marsh Marigold), *Mertensia* (Virginia Bluebells), and *Tiarella* (Foam Flower) twist through a shaded corridor to a pond halfway down the hill.



Above: A large population of white-form *Trillium erectum* has spread throughout *Actaea*. A wildlife-friendly brush pile is in the background, and a shallow well feeds a small stream below.





Left: Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) grows happily in a pond with native waterlilies. A slope at the other end of the pond leads down to a wet woods with an understory of native Viburnums and an herbaceous layer, including lots of Wild Leeks (*Allium tricoccum*) and *Trillium*. Swathes of *Mertensia* (Virginia Bluebells) are halfway up the hill toward the house.



Right: A small slope smothered in *Stylophorum diphyllum* is a wonderful sight in spring. Such happy plants in a wonderful landscape!

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## THE FINGER LAKES NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY STEERING COMMITTEE

**Freyda Black:** Facebook, Publicity  
**Audrey Bowe:** Plant Sale [REDACTED]  
**Krissy Boys:** At Large  
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## ADDITIONAL NEWSLETTER STAFF

**Rosemarie Parker:** Webmaster, Listserv  
Coordinator, & Assistant Newsletter Editor

**David Werier:** Newsletter Editor Emeritus



## Please Contribute to *Solidago*

WE WELCOME CONTRIBUTIONS THAT FEATURE WILD PLANTS OF THE FINGER LAKES REGION OF NEW YORK AND NEARBY. 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 **LOCAL FLORA** (plant lists or details of species from specific 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, meetings, workshops, and nurseries), **LETTERS** (commentaries and letters to the editor), **ESSAYS** (on botanical themes), **VERSE** (haiku, limericks, 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 and returned). We also can always use **FILLERS** (very short notes, small images, cartoons) for the last few inches of a column.

## *Solidago*

Newsletter of the  
Finger Lakes Native Plant Society

Volume 27, No. 2

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*Published quarterly at Ithaca, New York, USA.*

FLNPS (founded in 1997) is dedicated to the promotion of our native flora.

We sponsor talks, walks, and other activities related to conservation of native plants and their habitats. *Solidago* is published as a colorful online version, and a B&W paper version that is mailed. The online format is posted 3 months after publication. Please see [www.flnps.org](http://www.flnps.org) for details of membership, past *Solidago* issues, and updates about our programs.



**Pink Earth Lichen** (*Dibaeis baeomyces*), South Hill, Ithaca, N.Y., 11-12 April 2026, photo by Mary McKellar. Although the fruits look like tiny mushrooms, the fungal partner is an ascomycete.

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\* Please send *Solidago*  
contributions & correspondence  
to Robert Dirig, Editor, at  
[editorofsolidago@gmail.com](mailto:editorofsolidago@gmail.com)

**Deadline for the Autumn 2026  
issue is August 15<sup>th</sup>!**

## NAME THAT PLANT CONTEST



"A champion of champions. I love the round umbels and the size of the plants!" – David Werier

### LETTER

Thank you for your donation to the NYFA Atlas!

#### Dear Friends at Finger Lakes Native Plant Society,

Thank you so much for your generous donation of \$1000 as a "Prairie Smoke" level sponsor of the New York Flora Atlas. We greatly appreciate this. As you know, the Atlas is an outstanding resource for understanding the status of all wild plant species that grow in New York. Maintaining and continually up-dating the Atlas remains a central priority of the NYFA. We are glad you find it of use in your mission. Thank you so much for supporting this effort.

Sincerely,

Steven Daniel, NYFA Secretary, 30 April 2026



The photo from last issue's NAME THAT PLANT CONTEST [Solidago 27(1), p. 4] was of **Purple-stemmed Angelica** (*Angelica atropurpurea* — left). It is a member of the Apiaceae or carrot family, where many species can appear superficially similar, making identification sometimes challenging. Still, Purple-stemmed Angelica stands out among the rest by its spherical umbels and huge size (often 5–6 feet or more, tall!). Thanks to all who entered the contest, and congratulations to the winners: **Bob Dirig**, **Meghan Gilbert**, and **Robert Wesley**.

*This issue's mystery plant is shown below.*



Common and/or scientific names are acceptable, and more than one guess is allowed. Hints and suggestions are often provided to contest participants who try. Please submit your answer to

**David Werier (Nakita@lightlink.com)**

The photographs were taken in New York, by David Werier, on April 26<sup>th</sup> 2009 in Tompkins County (background image of plant in bud), and on April 28<sup>th</sup> 2026 in Livingston County (closeups of flowers).



## REPORT

## Takeaways From Day One at the 37th Annual NDAL Symposium: Seeing the Forest and the Trees

by Mara Braddy

I'm equal parts excited and nervous whenever I walk into a conference on the first day. I like to take in the room and read people's body language to see who might be receptive to boring, but necessary small talk. I know people will be friendly, but the shy girl in me will always gravitate to others who also seem a bit shy, happy to sit in awkward silence, but happy to chat a little too. With a fresh cup of coffee and a bagel in hand, I chose to sit at a round table near the front of the room. I attended the NDAL Symposium for two main reasons: to immerse myself in the expertise of those who have worked closely in landscape design and restoration for decades, and to make connections with others who, like me, are stepping into this realm for the first time.

I couldn't have chosen a better table to enjoy the conference from! I ended up sitting next to two women who both shared my enthusiasm for gardening, native plants, and making the world beautiful. Both women were independent landscaping business owners who dreamed of building gardens in their community. One was from Virginia, the other from northern Washington. We spoke about the joys of landscape design and the challenges of getting people to realize that native planting is not only beautiful, but wholly necessary for those who care about ecological restoration. Our breakfast conversation was the perfect primer to the morning's talks we were about to hear.

I was particularly taken by Larry Weaner's presentation titled "Making Wild Make Sense." He reminded that we often misattribute chaos and disorder to the ways nature operates. But Larry made sure to set the record straight that nature is in fact quite organized, and there are critical ways that we can take advantage of that knowledge in landscape design. He outlined two key land management principles: First is that relative ecological stability of a landscape will result in low maintenance down the line – a concept that most native plant enthusiasts already take to heart. However, I appreciate the emphasis he provided that ecological stability doesn't just mean high biodiversity. It means that at all stages of development in a meadow, a forest, or a backyard garden, the landscape maintains resilience and relative elasticity to disturbance. The second principle is all about identifying and exploiting the difference between desirable and undesirable species. This principle builds beautifully on the first by highlighting that native plant life cycles are not to be ignored, and in fact can be leveraged for beauty and for restoration goals.

The talk of the day that really took my breath away was given by Preston Montague (aptly named "Small Spaces, Big Habitats") who walked us through his philosophy on landscape design and restoration. He reminded us to always think about the wildlife you want to serve and the experiences with nature you want to have and work backwards. I love this framing because it centers both the altruistic spirit of "doing right by nature" and the more selfish, but totally normal desire to have a magical land through which we live, grow, and change. Preston graciously shared the many failures and triumphs he's had in finding the right combinations of seeding, transplanting, and allowing for spontaneous succession to take part in his landscapes. I appreciated his candor about how not everything he's tried has succeeded, but that he always walked away with more knowledge about the plant world than he had at the start.

The final, and most noteworthy highlight for me personally, of the conference was during the happy hour when I spotted Rebecca McMackin. I chose to swallow my social anxiety to say hello to my gardening hero. She and I had a lovely chat where I shamelessly praised her for the influence she's had on me and so many others who share her dream of seeing everyone in the world become a gardener. Her passion for ecological gardening is just as contagious in person as it is in her online presence. I feel so lucky to have finally met her and hope we can connect again in the future.

I'm hugely grateful for this opportunity to attend the NDAL Conference thanks to the scholarship funds provided by FLNPS! I would encourage anyone interested in ecological restoration and landscape design to attend this conference in future years.



LOCAL  
FLORA

**Bracken Fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*) croziers  
unroll on South Hill, near Ithaca, N.Y.!**

*Photos by Mary McKellar*



**There is a hint of magic in Bracken Fern croziers.** They start to unroll, as shown in this series, in slow stages, revealing unexpected colors as they grow — ice blue, with cinnamon hairs, and hints of yellow-green. The top row (1-5) slowly unwind, but grow rapidly as the weather warms (6-8). When fully expanded, the fronds have three parts, and the pinnae develop into an intricate foliage platform.

*Top row photographed on May 4<sup>th</sup>, bottom on May 10<sup>th</sup> 2026.*



## Plant Trivia ♦ *by Norm Trigoboff*

1. Jan Baptist van Helmont (1580-1644) discovered carbon dioxide, coined the term gas (from chaos), and helped found pneumatic chemistry. The Spanish Inquisition (no joke) put Helmont under house arrest in 1634 for studying plants (and for other serious crimes). Bio texts from grade school through college often note a famous post-humously-published plant experiment of his. What was it?
2. Which of these are true about skull lichens?
  - A. Skull lichens, like whumping willows and unicorns, are complete fictions, utterly absent from nature.
  - B. The scientific name for skull lichen is *Usnea humana* (or *Usnea cranii humani*, or *Usnea officinarum nostratium*). It is found in much of the northern hemisphere.
  - C. Ancient cultures used lichens as medicine.
  - D. People of the 16th century thought that lichens found on the skulls of dead humans would help the wounds of live people heal if put on the weapon that caused the wound.
  - E. Modern cosmetics and herbal medicines use substances found in *Usnea*.
3. Which human activity uses the words bagasse, jaggery (panela, piloncillo or rapadura), mud and massecuite? Is it horticulture, fantasy war gaming, forestry, sugar refining, drug enforcement, cabbage farming, or furniture making?
4. Paraformaldehyde pills used to help with the harvest of a certain native plant product. The pills harmed the plant and were carcinogenic to humans. How and why were they used? When were they banned?
5. Hoopers Law:
  - A. tells how long it takes a dirt basketball court to return to the natural state
  - B. regulates tulip imports to Holland
  - C. was developed by Max Hooper to find the age of hedges
  - D. sets standards for wine casks
6. The battle of the hedges was
  - A. one of the toughest battles for US troops in WWII
  - B. a 55-million-dollar legal conflict among French landscaping companies
  - C. a decisive victory by Julius Caesar over the Gauls in 55 BC
  - D. a friendly international plant breeding competition that ended in 1955
7. The first hedges served to: **A.** prevent soil loss; **B.** confine domestic animals; **C.** pool liquid assets to improve investment performance; **D.** protect field crops from wild animals; **E.** funnel wildlife into traps; **F.** provide fire wood; **G.** mark property borders
- 8a. If you want to see the International Rutabaga Curling Championship live, where would you go: Austin Texas, Coober Pedy Australia, Kuala Lumpur Malaysia, Ithaca NY, Longyearbyen Norway, Portland Oregon, or Roswell New Mexico?
- 8b. Suppose you want to run in the Skunk Cabbage Classic, a half marathon race, where would you go? Same choices.
- 8c. Where is it illegal to name your child Rutabaga or Cabbage? Same choices.
9. Carl Linnaeus, the great Swedish biologist known as the father of modern taxonomy, formalized the binomial nomenclature we still use to name living things. The following are all true except one. Which one?
  - A. Linnaeus went to a trivial school in his native Sweden.
  - B. The type specimen for the species *Homo sapiens* is the remains of Linnaeus.
  - C. Linnaeus was about 5 feet tall.
  - D. Linnaeus got his doctoral degree after two weeks of study at the University of Harderwijk in the Netherlands.
  - E. Early works by Linnaeus used species first then genus. What we call *Homo Sapiens* he first called *Sapiens Homo*. In 1745, Anders Celsius switched this to what we have today.
  - F. The Celsius temperature scale, invented by Anders Celsius in 1742, had water boiling at 0°C and freezing at 100 °C. In 1745, Linnaeus switched this to what we have today.
10. Where is the world's largest conservatory (greenhouse-like building)?

*See answers on page 10.*



**Plant Trivia ANSWERS ♦ by Norm Trigoboff (from page 9)**

**1.** Helmont's potted willow experiment of 1648 aimed to find out whether plants gained weight by taking in something from dirt or the water. This was one of the first quantitative experiments in biology. He weighed a willow and weighed the dirt in the pot. After 5 years of watering, the plant (and Helmont's kids) gained much weight. The dirt (and Helmont) weighed about the same. Back then, this was advanced technology. Today, Helmont would flunk intro to bio with his study. He weighed the willow wet and the dirt dry; the pot, though covered, was likely of porous clay; and he failed to note the species of willow, the amount of water used, how he dried and weighed 200 pounds of dirt (which would have been hard to do reliably), and how he separated the dirt and roots (also tough to do reliably, which makes me think he fudged his data). Today's books give the big role to carbon dioxide in plant weight gain, but Helmont thought his experiment proved that the gain came just from the water. *See:*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan\\_Baptist\\_van\\_Helmont](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Baptist_van_Helmont)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/clips/zpgb4wx#:~:text=He%20weighed%20a%20willow%20tree,was%20almost%20the%20same%20mass>

<https://helmont1.tripod.com/hersheypsb49-3.htm>

**2. A.** False. The term skull lichens referred to lichens, mostly *Usnea* species, found on skulls. These days, thanks to human sanitary rituals, lichens rarely grow on human skulls.

**B.** False. Those three scientific-looking Latin names are old common names. You'd need magic to know just what they name.

**C.** True. *Usnea* species have usnic acid, an antibiotic, so their use likely helped.

**D.** True. This belief came from Paracelsus (1493-1541), one of the less reputable founders of modern medicine and a bit of a role model for van Helmont. One modern writer says (and this is pretty much the consensus among medical historians) that Paracelsus and Helmont "...carried arrogance and self-conceit almost to the point of insanity... and revelled in the wildest speculations..." Paracelsus' claim about lichens sparked a big controversy. The kerfuffle concerned why weapon salve worked, rather than whether it worked, which was widely accepted. You may think that his advice may have killed people, but you have to view it in a historical context. Any drug smeared on a weapon rather than a hurt person was likely a step up from the rough medical treatments of the day, such as bleeding. An old treatment for malaria was to throw the patient into a bush, pull him out fast and hope the fever stayed in the bush. Thanks to Paracelsus, in late medieval times, people collected (or counterfeited) lichens found on skulls, preferably those of executed criminals. They sold them for big bucks to the medical trade. *See:* Fransen, S., 2022. Weapon salve in the Renaissance. In *Encyclopedia of Renaissance Philosophy* (pp. 3528-3530),

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/003591571600901601>, and the Wikipedia entry for *Usnea*.

**E.** True.

**3.** Sugar refining. Jaggery was a good clue here. It refers to a traditional unrefined sugar.

**4.** They were put in maple tree tap holes to make the sap run longer. They were banned around 1990.

**5. C.** Count the woody plant species in a 30-yard section of hedge and multiply by 110.

**6. A.** Also known as the hedge war or bocage, it followed the Normandy landing in France.

**7. D** - says the Wikipedia entry for hedge.

**8a.** Stay in Ithaca. The championship, the only one of its kind, takes place with a parade, music, and locally grown foods—organic or pesticide enhanced—each December on the last day of the Farmers' Market at high noon.

**8b.** Again, stay in Ithaca. The Skunk Cabbage Classic has run each spring since 1983. The 43rd race went off March 29, 2026. Later that day, I happened to see a half dozen college students in bathing suits at East Shore Park on Cayuga Lake. They felt the race wasn't painful enough, so they went for a dip.

**8c.** In 2006, Malaysia banned naming babies after fruits and vegetables (or animals and colors) says BBC News. *See:*

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/5229060.stm>

**9. A.** True. A trivial school, a kind of secondary school, taught the trivium of grammar, dialectic and rhetoric.

**B.** True. He examined himself—just himself as far as we know. A type specimen is a permanent reference for a species, genus, or other taxa. Taxonomists use different types of type specimens, such as Holotype, Paratype, Allotype, Neotype, Syntype, Lectotype, Isotype, Epitype, even Kleptotype. In 1758, Linnaeus named and classified humans. Type specimens came later. In 1959, an international commission chose Linnaeus as the lectotype for *Homo sapiens*. His body lies in Uppsala Cathedral, unavailable to scientists (other than to pay their respects).

**C.** True. Some say just under 5 feet. Others say just over 5 feet.

**D.** True. Harderwijk awarded degrees in as little as a week. Despite having about the same training time as a school bus driver, Linnaeus later gained the title of chief physician of Sweden. **E.** False. **F.** True.

**10.** The Eden Project in Cornwall, England has biome domes stuffed with more than a million plants. Some of the domes house the world's largest indoor rainforest.



REPORT



Plain-leaf Pussytoes  
(*Antennaria parlinii*)

A Photo Gallery of  
plants seen on a  
FLNPS walk, led  
by Whitney Carleton  
on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2026 at  
the Indian Fort  
Nature Preserve

Photos by Fred Haynes  
See his 12-page gallery  
at the link below.



Rue Anemone  
(*Thalictrum thalictroides*)



Early Saxifrage  
(*Saxifraga virginensis*)

The Indian Fort Nature Preserve is a 60-acre, heavily wooded site in Geneseo, N.Y. The site was strategically chosen by the Seneca for its formidable natural defenses. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Great White Trillium  
(*Trillium grandiflorum*)



Early Meadow Rue  
(*Thalictrum dioicum*)

Link for the full pdf from Fred Haynes:

<https://flnps.org/sites/default/files/newsletters/9%20Indian%20Fort%20FLNPS%20May%202.pdf>



This photo shows Robert leading an aster & goldenrod walk on Sept. 13, 2025, on Connecticut Hill (see *Solidago* 26(4), Dec. 2025, for details).  
*Photo by Courtney Kelly Jett. This FLNPS walk is one of many he has led throughout the Finger Lakes.*

We congratulate F. Robert Wesley, FLNPS's President, on being honored by the Town of Ithaca Conservation Board with their **2025 Richard B. Fischer Environmental Conservation Award** for his 50 years of protecting rare native plants and shaping local land conservation!

Members of the Conservation Board presented the award at 6:00 p.m. on May 19<sup>th</sup> 2026, at the Town of Ithaca's Culver Road Preserve. The award honors Wesley for his dedicated and detailed attention to the Unique Natural Areas of our Town's botanical environment. His sharp-eyed inventories, and friendly sharing of his encyclopedic understanding of our open spaces, has had a major influence on our ability to advance land protection efforts that preserve native species and manage invasive plants. We are especially grateful for his work preserving rare plants like Fringed Gentians, American Globeflowers, and Leedy's Roseroot.

Robert also has promoted wild flora by teaching about our native plants on his many enthusiastic walks, talks, and tours. His contributions to the Finger Lakes Native Plant Society have been many.



### Thank You!

**WE ARE GRATEFUL** to our columnists and other contributors, including **writers** Krissy Boys (p. 14), Mara Braddy (p. 7), Steven Daniel (p. 6), Fred Haynes (p. 11), Rosemarie Parker (pp. 2-4, 13-14), Norm Trigoboff (pp. 9-10), David Werier (p. 6), & Robert Dirig (pp. 8, 12); & **photographers** R. Dirig (pp. 14), Mary McKellar (pp. 5, 8), Rosemarie Parker (pp. 2-4), Charles R. Smith (p. 1), & David Werier (p. 6).

**Layout & design** by the Editor, **proofreading** by Rosemarie Parker, and **printing** by Gnomon Copy in Ithaca, N.Y. Anna Stalter emailed the newsletter, Pat Curran mailed paper copies, & Rosemarie posted to the web.

Please check our website ([www.flnps.org](http://www.flnps.org)) regularly throughout the summer for announcements and details of walks, workshops, and other events. Many thanks to our **Steering Committee** (p. 5) and all of our members for supporting FLNPS and its activities. We wish everyone in our reading audience a pleasant summer with frequent revels with wild plants!

— Robert Dirig

## Help to Clarify the Features of a New Species of *Actaea* — Citizen Science by Request

by Rosemarie Parker

Written on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2026

My *Actaea rubra* (Red Baneberry) is starting to bloom, and *A. pachypoda* (White Baneberry) will not be far behind. If you have ever seen pink berries on one of your plants, or in a nearby natural area, this is a request for your help.

I have referenced a paper (below) that claims *at least some* pink-berried *Actaea pachypoda/rubra* are a new species, *Actaea rhodostigma*, rather than a hybrid or color form. Even for true botanists, however, the details are sparse for distinguishing between the new species and other possible means for getting pink berries. There is a recognized hybrid between *A. rubra* x *A. pachypoda*. Probably there are the same two species forming slightly different looking hybrids. Presumably the new species could hybridize with both of the original species (*rubra* & *pachypoda*) and maybe even with hybrids of the two. Sounds like a mess.

Since FLNPS has distributed pink-berried forms of what we called *Actaea pachypoda*, I know that some of us have such plants. David Werier (*NYFA Flora Atlas & Annotated Flora of NY*) feels this is a good opportunity to document the features that are supposed to distinguish the varied forms and species. What he hopes to see is multiple photos of **the same plant** with date and location. Photos should show:

- ♦The pedicel (the flower & berry stalk) is supposed to be intermediate between *A. rubra* & *A. pachypoda*. If you are motivated, have someone hold a ruler behind the stalk.
- ♦The inflorescence with unopened flower buds [as in Figure 1A on third page (un-numbered) of the reference]. Be sure to show if there are pink edges to the petals.
- ♦The inflorescence with fully opened flowers [as in Figure 1B on third page (un-numbered) of the reference]. Be sure to show a direct-on view of the center to show pink or white.
- ♦The mature fruits [as in Figure 1C on third page (un-numbered) of the reference] – whatever color they are.

Ideally doing the same with close plants that end up being truly red or white will help clarify the different bloom times described in the paper. So if you, like me, can't really remember exactly which plant has the pink berries, that is wonderful. Just photograph them all but maybe leave a marked stake so you can be sure to label the photos correctly.

**THANKS TO ANYONE WHO IS WILLING TO PARTICIPATE.** You can send your results to me so I can compile a quick results article for *Solidago*, but I will definitely forward to David.

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**Reference mentioned above:** "Hidden in Plain Sight: A New Pink-flowered Species of *Actaea* L. (Ranunculaceae) from New York," by Justin Scholten, Arianna Sprenger, & Chelsea D. Specht, *Journal of the Torrey Botanical Society* 153(2), 19 pages, 2026.

**See also:** "Ph.D. Student Finds New Flower in Finger Lakes Forests," by Holly Hartigan, *Cornell Chronicle*, issue of April 29<sup>th</sup> 2026. 🌿



## Ask A Native Plant Gardener\*

Questions from Freyda Black  
Answers by Krissy Boys & Rosemarie Parker

◀ Crooked-stemmed Aster  
(*Symphyotrichum prenanthoides*)  
Photo by Robert Dirig

**Question 1:** Do you have any suggestions as to getting a jump on the vigorous spreaders, like Bishop's Weed (*aka* Goutweed) and European Buttercup, especially at the edges of beds, before they extend their greedy underground roots/stolons into the midst of our plantings? They seem capable of running an infinite distance beneath any smothering coverings, and I don't want to use herbicides.

**KB:** Goutweed and *Ranunculus* will prevail. Suppress with fabric; if not fabric, maybe try boards and blocks, short of poured concrete.

**RP:** Krissy is referring to landscape fabric, a woven polymeric material that will eventually kill most everything beneath it. I agree with her pessimism, however. I live with the buttercups, and have never succeeded in removing all of the Bishop's Weed when I have tried in gardens I have helped with. If anyone reading this has a solution that does not involve heavy herbicides, please send a note to *Solidago*!

**Question 2:** After [removing non-native overgrowth; finding several native herbaceous species growing], *Symphyotrichum prenanthoides* has created quite a solid mass of plants, which is expanding and engulfing the [other species]. While I have been happy to see it suppressing the invasives with its solid root mass, I need to halt its march over the other plants. ... Bishop's Weed and Buttercups [take all available weeding time.] Is there anything I can do to discourage [*S. prenanthoides*'] spread? I have always left the seed stalks all winter for the birds, and it would take a tractor trailer load of mulch to cover areas where I need to suppress growth. [No synthetics or herbicides] ... Cardboard doesn't work ... the plants [go through & under]. I hope you can give some suggestions on how to manage my native garden family so that diversity can prevail.

**KB:** Welcome the spread of *S. prenanthoides*.

**RP:** Again, Krissy speaks with the voice of experience. Mulching & other suppression methods are temporary if you have a large reservoir of the aggressive species to simply expand again. You need to look at what *can* grow *with* the aster. I think there may be a way to get in some diversity by following Larry Weiner's dictum of "exploiting the differences." You can exploit timing and height. For example, try adding some early flowering species that will mostly grow before the asters get too tall. Maybe *Geranium maculatum* in less wet parts and *Caltha palustris* (swamp marigold) in the wetter areas. Wood ferns and Lady Fern can come up through companions, but they do start later. I was thinking of recommending *Iris versicolor* and sedges in moister areas, but I see you have some. Do they stand up to the *S. prenanthoides*? Species that get taller faster is the other angle to try. I have *Asclepias incarnata*, *Chelone glabra*, *Iris* and *Vernonia* coming up through lawn grass and *Vinca minor*. *Physostegia virginiana* (Obedient Plant) would definitely compete with the *S. prenanthoides*, but it (like the *Vernonia*) may well be the next species you want to reduce. Maybe add some *Solidagos* to enhance the late aster display.

**We welcome readers' questions about growing native flora. Please send submissions to [info@fnps.org](mailto:info@fnps.org) with the subject ASK A GARDENER. Questions will be printed before the answer.**

**\*Would you like to be added to the list of native gardeners who will occasionally choose to answer one of these questions? Please let Rosemarie know at [gardener.parker@gmail.com](mailto:gardener.parker@gmail.com). Please send in your questions – you will get an answer which will later be published in *Solidago*.**

