

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE GOALS:

To follow club tenets of education, conservation, preservation and beautification as we:

1. Educate ourselves and others on best gardening practices for propagating and growing native plants.
2. Plant and encourage use of native plants in local gardens and landscapes; remove or reduce invasive plants in local gardens and landscapes.
3. Support healthy, balanced ecosystems for our ecoregion; spread awareness of the beauty and utility of such ecosystems.
4. Promote awareness of the challenges to our ecosystems and mitigation strategies for pathogens, invasive plants/insects/wildlife.
5. Support ecologically-beneficial legislation and projects where needed locally, statewide, nationwide and beyond.
6. Meet our club membership duties and share our conservation interests.

COMMITTEE REQUIREMENTS:

Conservation has no additional participation requirements beyond what WGC requires of members (*see membership application.*)

Once you are on the committee's mailing list you can know what's coming up so as to participate in committee meetings and activities. We hope you participate whenever you can - because it's about exercising and strengthening our gardening and botany skills and knowledge to help ourselves and others... while having some fun together!

MONTHLY COMMITTEE MEETINGS:

We meet monthly from Sept to May. This year, unless otherwise noted, the monthly meetings are held at 10:30 am on the first Wednesday of the month, currently on Zoom.

Members normally receive an email the day before the meeting with agenda and Zoom link. That morning, open the email and click the link to join the Zoom. Bring your cup of something cozy and chat or listen as you like.

ONGOING COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES:

1. **Seed Strolls:** group walks at Wilton locales to practice plant ID and limited harvest of seeds from ripe seedheads of native plant species. Done only in fair weather; as per protocol, no more than 1 stroll on any given day (to prevent cross-contamination of sites.)
2. **Group seed-cleaning sessions:** exercise the skills of recognizing and separating plant seeds from seed heads, removing excess chaff/debris; technique varies by seed type.
3. **Winter seed-sowing:** group events held indoors to sow collected native-species seeds in gallon-size plastic jugs that serve as "mini greenhouses."
4. **Group Plant-in:** exercise planting skills by planting young plants from their jugs into WGC community-garden plot to mature for use next year. To be done after May Plant Sale.
5. **Follow-up watering:** we take turns watering the plants at WGC community garden and the young plantings in new OTH pollinator garden bed (*see item 1, below.*)

OTHER COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES, 2022-23:

1. **OTH pollinator garden:** design, planting, care of new learning garden bed on Wilton's Pollinator Pathway at OTH. Hardscape to be installed late winter 2023 as a generous donation by Wilton's Bolton Landscaping. In the pipeline: partner with other local orgs such as WLCT on native-species pollinator gardens.
2. **How-to's:** youth "how-to" winter-sowing, etc., presented at Trackside.
3. **Mini Flash Mobs:** ad hoc volunteering to help plant native plants or remove invasives (e.g.,

along Norwalk River with Trout Unlimited, at Sharp Hill with NRVTT, at Pocket Park with Pollinator Pathway.)

4. **Flower Show '21 Education Exhibits:** display the group's twin exhibits re Natives and Invasives at area fairs and venues: FGCC state flower show in Hartford; Zero Waste Faire; Earth Day'22 at Bartlett Arboretum; Greenwich Experience the Sound Festival; Earth Day'23 at Wilton Library; Cannon Grange Fair'23.
5. **Initiative support:** of Dana Dam removal project from Norwalk River north of Merwin Meadows; food-scrap recycling in the town of Wilton; CT state law against chlorpyrifos use on golf courses.

TERMINOLOGY WORTH KNOWING:

1. **Native plant:** a plant species in a given region that evolved naturally in that region without human introduction/intervention.
2. **Near-native, neighbor-native plant:** a species native to our region of New England, New York, and native to some part of the eastern US.
3. **US-native plant:** native to an area of the US that doesn't abut CT; Go Botany's website typically calls them "introduced" for CT.
4. **Introduced plant:** a species not native to the area where it is growing, most likely originally brought to an area from its native range by (intentional or accidental) human action.
5. **Naturalized plant:** an introduced species that has spread over time. Many are herbs brought from Europe in colonial times for food or medicine.
6. **Invasive plant:** an introduced species that has one or more advantages (prolific re-seeding, no natural enemies, etc.) that have enabled it to spread to where it out-competes and replaces the native flora and harms the ecosystem. **97 species on CT Invasive Plant List as of Oct 2021 (see Resources item 2, "CIPWG.")**

7. **Aggressive plant:** a robustly-spreading native species that may crowd out its neighbors. Can also describe an introduced species that spreads robustly in the garden but which is not known to be invasive.
8. **Pollinator:** an animal species that feeds on and collects flower pollen (proteins) and nectar (carbs) for food, in the process pollinating the flowers it visits: mostly insects such as bees, butterflies, moths, flies; also hummingbirds. Plant pollination is essential to the food web.
9. **Pollinator plant:** a species that is notable for its flowers' nectar and pollen, required by many native species of pollinators.
10. **Host plant:** a species that is desirable because its vegetative parts (leaves, stems, etc.) are food for the larvae of 1 or more species of native insects key to the food web. These larvae (e.g., moth and butterfly caterpillars) are vital for survival of other wildlife (e.g., birds, which rely on caterpillars to feed and nourish their young.)
11. **Keystone plant:** a genus or species of native plant on which other species in an ecosystem largely depend, to the point that, if it were removed, the ecosystem would change drastically.
12. **Taxonomic name:** a plant's definitive ID; its 2-part Latin name in format *Genus species*, as opposed to its common name(s.) Species "cultivars" (cultivated varieties) are often bred for traits (size, flower color, etc.) that differ from the straight species; the term "nativar" might be used for native species. Varieties are often named and marketed w/the variety name enclosed in single quotes, e.g., *Symphotrichum novae-angliae* 'Honeysong Pink.' **Note:** a stand-alone "x" in a name indicates a hybrid (strictly speaking, 2 species interbred; a non-native "tell"?). *Genus x hybrid species name* is a typical format, e.g., *Leucanthemum x superbum*.
13. **Hardiness zones:** USDA system based on avg min winter temps. Wilton is in zone **6b**.

14. **Eco-Regions:** EPA system of 4 levels of ecological regions based on many environmental metrics; CT is part of Level-I region **8**, *Eastern Temperate Forests*. Each Level-I region sub-divided into Level IIs, in turn sub-divided into Level IIIs, then Level IVs. Our Level -III Eco-region is **59**, *Northeastern Coastal Zone*.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

1. **Doug Tallamy:** entomologist; Prof Agriculture and Natural Resources, Dept of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology, U of Delaware; NYT-best-selling author of *Bringing Nature Home*, *Nature's Best Hope*, *The Nature of Oaks*; authority on native insects/plants, ecosystems/the food web and how we can help.
2. **CIPWG:** CT Invasive Plant Working Group, affiliated with CT Ag Station (CAES) and UConn; they provide info on **CT Invasive Plant List**.
3. **Native Plant Trust:** formerly the New England Wildflower Society; based in Mass.
4. **Go Botany: Native Plant Trust:** our primary online reference to check a species' native status.
5. **Pollinator Pathway (pollinator-pathway.org):** a pesticide-free gardening ethos begun in Wilton. Use mostly-native pollinator and host plants to provide safe corridors for native pollinators to forage and migrate.
6. **Native ecotypes: seed from the Northeast | eco59 seed collective :** online source for ecotype native seeds, plugs, from CT organic farms.
7. **Missouri Botanical Garden:** use its **Plant Finder** to see growth needs and info for many native plants.
8. **CNH Portal Home (neherbaria.org):** view hi-res images of the WGC's 2 herbaria, with plates dating as far back as the late 1800s.
9. **Picture This, iNaturalist,** or other smartphone plant-ID apps are a great help in the field.



On front: Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*). Detail from one of 20 WGC notecards created for the Club's 2021 centennial by conservation committee members, featuring high-resolution digital images of native specimens selected from the Club's two herbaria.



CONSERVATION COMMITTEE 101:



Introductory Info for 2022-2023