

UPCOMING EVENTS

- MAY 2** **Wandering Invaders: Multiflora Rose**
Van Scott Nature Reserve • 10am-12pm
- MAY 9** **Morning Wellness Walk**
Van Scott Nature Reserve • 9am-11am
- MAY 16** **Walk and Talk at the Forest Reserve at Smallwood**
Smallwood, NY • 10am-12pm
- MAY 22** **Spring Monitoring Volunteer Training**
Van Scott Nature Reserve • 1pm-5pm
- MAY 23** **What's That Native? A Hands-On Gardening Workshop**
Van Scott Nature Reserve • 10am-1pm
- MAY 30** **Maintaining and Caring for Your Seedlings: Growing Your Own Food**
Van Scott Nature Reserve • 10am-11:30am
- JUNE 5** **Timber Sale Field Tour**
Delaware State Forest District Office • 10am-1pm

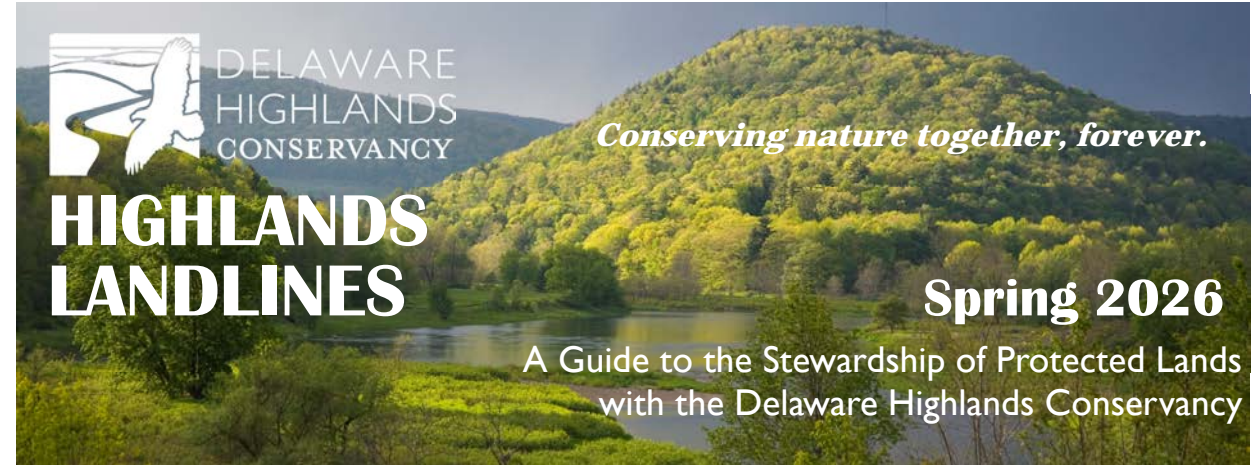
Events require advance registration. Visit www.DelawareHighlands.org/events or call 570-226-3164/845-583-1010 to learn more or register for these events.

- **INSIDE**
- **Winterberry: An Essential Ornamental**
- **Living With Beavers, or Not**
- **Species Spotlight: Rhododendron**
- **Volunteer Spotlight**
- **Annual Monitoring Questionnaire**



Serving New York and Pennsylvania
571 Perkins Pond Rd | Beach Lake, PA 18405

DELAWARE HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY



Winterberry: An Essential Ornamental

By Lucas Green, Reserve and Facilities Coordinator

Following the passing of Conservancy founder Barbara Yeaman in early 2025, I began working with her son, Bill Yeaman, to add plants throughout the Van Scott Nature Reserve in her honor. Bill wished to source native plants that matched Barbara's vibrant and resilient nature. We planted a red maple and a pink flowering dogwood on a trail near the Eugene and Mary Van Scott Pavilion, and shadbush and winterberry plants along the path on the far side of the large pond.

I love this small section of the Butterfly Trail because it leads to a bench along Beach Lake Creek, trickling in on one side with the stillness of the pond on the other. It is an inherently reflective place, and a great place to plant a winterberry.

Because of its wetland proximity and sunny location, winterberry enjoys moist soils and full sun to partial shade. It also enjoys company as a dioecious (having male and female individuals) plant, and winterberries must be grouped accordingly. A male plant is necessary to pollinate female plants in order for them to produce berries.

The berries are the neat part, giving the plant their ornamental value by providing bright splashes of color through the winter. One of the female winterberries we planted produces tangerine-colored berries, having ancestry from the 'Winter Gold' cultivar. As a native plant, the berries are attractive to local pollinators such as bugs and birds. American Robins are particularly known to enjoy winterberries.



Continued on page 3...

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What is Highlands LandLines?

Highlands LandLines is our twice-yearly newsletter just for landowners with a conservation easement through the Delaware Highlands Conservancy. With practical tips and helpful resources, LandLines offers useful information and tips for the stewardship of your land and conservation easement.

This publication is also available electronically.
 Interested in seeing your ideas in a future issue?
 Connect with our Stewardship Staff on Page 6.

Annual Monitoring Visits

Annual monitoring visits are an important part of caring for your conserved property and protecting its conservation values. Each year, Conservancy staff visit every conserved property to document its condition and ensure the terms of the conservation easement are being upheld.

As a conservation easement landowner, **please use the links below to complete your Annual Monitoring Visit Form.** This allows you to update the Conservancy on the status of your property, choose a visit date, and ask any questions or address any concerns.

If a form is not received, Conservancy staff will reach out to schedule a visit. Monitoring visits may occur even if the landowner is not present, as permitted by the conservation easement.



DelawareHighlands.org/Monitoring



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Van Scott Nature Reserve
 571 Perkins Pond Rd
 Beach Lake, PA 18405

www.DelawareHighlands.org

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Volunteer Spotlight

As part of the Conservancy's mission to protect and steward land conserved in partnership with local landowners, a dedicated group of monitoring volunteers joins stewardship staff on annual visits. In each issue of LandLines, we highlight a volunteer who generously gives their time to supporting conservation efforts across the region.

John Kocijanski

10+ Years as a Volunteer

From: Monticello, NY

Favorite Protected Place: Lemons Brook Farm in Bethel, NY

Conservancy Involvement: Monitoring, Trail and Lawn Maintenance at Lemon's Brook Farm, Winter Eagle Watch

Q: What inspired you to become a monitoring volunteer and get involved in conservation work in our community?

I grew up in rural Sullivan County near Grahamsville and due to this I developed a love for nature and the outdoors. Sharing this with others is important to me.

Q: Can you share why protecting the Upper Delaware River region is important to you?

Being a Sullivan County resident, I've visited the Delaware River area many times and have come to appreciate the river area. It is peaceful, scenic, and is a sacred place for many people so it is worthy of being protected in a natural state as much as possible.

Q: Is there a place or experience in the field that's been especially meaningful to you?

My time volunteering at the Bethel property holds special meaning for me. I got to know this place very well.

John and his partner Vicky recently completed a two-month road trip across the United States to enjoy the wildlife and natural beauty of our country.



Stewardship of Your Property

Stewardship staff encourage you to reach out any time you have questions or concerns about your conservation easement. There are several activities and uses that may require the Conservancy's feedback or approval, so it is always a good idea to contact us before making any significant changes, including the following:



BEFORE YOU BUILD

A conservation easement may allow for residential or agricultural structures to be built on the property. However, it is important to confirm with the Conservancy that your easement permits new structures or the expansion of existing structures, and to follow the proper process before beginning any construction.



BEFORE YOU CUT

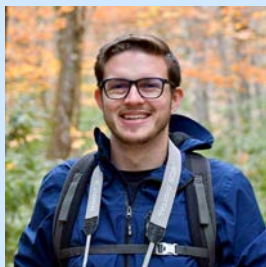
Your conservation easement may require the forest on your property to be cared for and managed in accordance with a forest management/ stewardship plan. Please contact the Conservancy before starting any forest management activities, as they must be reviewed and approved prior to any timber harvesting activities per the easement terms. We can also provide a list of natural resource professionals to help you achieve your land management goals.



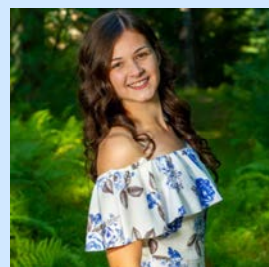
BEFORE YOU SELL

Conservation easements run with the land even if you sell or transfer the conserved property, which means subsequent landowners are also bound by the terms of the easements. Informing and connecting the Conservancy with the realtor and ultimately the new landowner(s) before selling or transferring your property helps with reducing the risk of easement challenges or violations after the transition is complete.

STEWARDSHIP STAFF



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Winterberry, Continued from page 1...

You may hear that winterberry is highly deer resistant, though this isn't necessarily the case. Deer don't prefer the plant, but that doesn't mean they won't eat it – especially after a long winter. To protect Barbara's memorial winterberry, I will be putting a fence around the plant before the deer can do any damage. Once the plant is more established, I'll remove the fence; until then, I'll apply deer repellent once it leafs out.

Keep an eye out for winterberry in the wild. Notice their glossy green leaves, almost like a mint leaf. Pay attention to the color of the berry too. If you choose to plant them, make sure they are well-watered and get plenty of sun. Plant one male within a group of females, and always remember that the berries are not safe for human consumption.



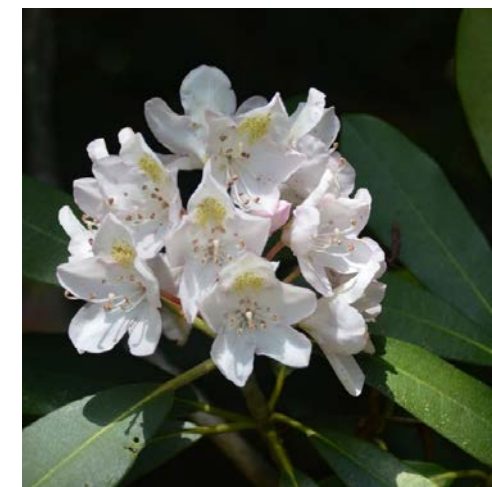
Species Spotlight

Rhododendron (*Rhododendron maximum*)

Spring has sprung and you may start to come across Rhododendrons in your woods! More specifically, a *Rhododendron maximum*, one of the most common rhododendron species found in the Upper Delaware River region.

These shade-loving plants can be found in swamps and forests with moist and acidic soils, and are known for reaching large heights of 10-20 feet (3-6 meters) and can live 75-100 years, with some Rhododendrons reaching up to 130 years of age. Rhododendrons have large, long, green leaves that are often accompanied by clumps of white, pink or purple flowers in the summer. While this foliage is toxic to animals and makes native rhododendrons deer-resistant, the same can't be said for cultivated rhododendrons due to differing environmental factors and pressures. So, watch your deer, gardeners!

Ecologically, Rhododendron flowers are a vital nectar source for pollinators such as bees, birds and butterflies, and their dense canopies serve as suitable habitat for small mammals and birds. Rhododendrons are also incredibly resilient plants and are often the first to sprout after extreme disturbances, including fire events.



Living with Beavers, or Not

by Christine Wilson

“I think beavers are born with PhDs in hydrology and structural engineering,” says Lucas Green, the Conservancy’s Reserve and Facilities Coordinator. “Their ability to transform a landscape is unique and really extraordinary.”

Persistence and Ingenuity

That ability draws mixed reviews from landowners who find their ponds and streams occupied by the rodents. “I was at war with them,” says Barry Chlypvka. He and his partner, Liz Huntington own the conserved Barn Bass Sanctuary in Galilee, Wayne County, PA with a pond that generations of the family have enjoyed.

“They showed up a while ago and plugged up the culvert that drains water out of the pond. I cleared it but by the next morning they had repaired the damage. That just kept happening. I cleared it. They plugged it. I was persistent but so were they,” Barry noted.

The beavers in Barry and Liz’s pond caused the water to rise and pushed its boundaries up to the edge of the woods. The beavers also gnawed on and weakened the footbridge that provides access to the pond. “The bridge is solid,” says Barry, “but it was increasingly at risk for splintering and being swept away in a big storm.”

They worried about higher bacteria levels from the more stagnant pond and the arrival of invasive species or unwelcome vegetation that threatened to make the pond unswimmable. As anyone who has seen their clean, angular cut, beavers are also capable of felling every small tree and some bigger ones within 200 feet of their lodge and hauling them to the water to feed on and build their dams and lodges. Beaver activity can also lead to flooded roads and farmlands.

Barry’s solution was to build a Clemson Pond Leveler, designed by Clemson University researchers. He drilled holes in a trapezoidal polyethylene pipe about a foot in diameter to extend the drainage pipe further and deeper into the pond. Barry intended to place his home-made version underwater attached to the original drainage pipe.



Barry Chlypvka with the Clemson Pond Leveler.



“These things work,” he says. “The beavers can’t get to the culvert to block it. There are too many holes to plug but enough that the water flows through the device.” The device also lessens or eliminates the sound of moving water, an irresistible trigger that impels beavers to block its source.

Barry never got to test his pond leveler because the beavers disappeared before he could get it into the water. “I have no idea why they left,” he says.

“Our goal was really to make sharing a pond with the beavers possible,” says Liz Huntington, taking a more conciliatory approach, “so that the entire living community thrives in and around it, including us.”

An Ecological Plus

Andy Curtis deals with beavers on his property but has a different point of view. He and his family have owned the conserved Journey’s End Farm in Sterling, Wayne County, PA for almost 100 years and currently produce maple syrup and vegetables.

“The beavers have been here for a while and I think of them as belonging,” he says, “although they have created one problem.” The beavers damned the stream and forged an irregularly shaped pond with their dam tucked against the shore farthest from the house. In the process of changing the size of the pond and the course of the stream, they created a body of water that surrounds and isolates an old barn on the property.

“We have to do something about the barn,” Andy shrugs. “It’s falling down, and the beavers didn’t make the job any easier, but that was going to happen anyway. What I like best is the environment they have created is a great draw for wildlife. We see such a variety of birds. We have green herons and red-tailed hawks nesting around the pond.”

What You Can Do

There’s not much you can do if you want to attract beavers to your property, but there are steps you can take to discourage their arrival or manage them if they are a nuisance or causing damage.

- ◆ Protect small trees, especially aspen and birches, with wire mesh to keep beavers from cutting them down. Trees are used as structural material for their dams and lodges, and beavers eat the softer, tender leaves and bark from the tops as a food source.
- ◆ Regularly unplug pipes and, if possible, minimize or eliminate the sound of running water. You may have to do this repeatedly to discourage beaver activity.
- ◆ Research flow-control devices such as pond levelers and beaver deceivers to keep beavers from plugging water outflows. **Additional information can be found in The Beaver Institute’s Beaver Library at BeaverInstitute.org.**
- ◆ Beavers are a protected species and a managed furbearer in both Pennsylvania and New York, requiring specific permits for trapping or removing them and their dams outside of regulated seasons. Please contact the PA Game Commission or NY Dept. of Conservation for more information.

“Beavers are remarkable,” adds Lucas Green. “They create wetlands that can thrive for up to 30 years, but they also can cause serious problems. Living with them means understanding why and how they do the things they do.”