

# HIGHLANDS LAND LINES

Spring 2009

A Guide to the Stewardship of Lands Protected by Conservation Easements with the Delaware Highlands Conservancy

## GOING NATIVE: MAKE YOUR PROPERTY HEALTHY

*Spring has Sprung* and it's that time again where we turn to the outside landscape and begin to think about cleaning flower beds, raking branches fallen victim to winter storms and contemplating what to plant to beautify and improve the splendor of the garden and beyond. When deciding what new plants, shrubs and trees to plant, supporting and encouraging native plant populations on your property have many advantages. Native plants and trees help create diverse and healthy wildlife habitats. The plants are often heartier and, while it is not the case for all native species, many are deer resistant. Each time you choose native plants over exotic plants you contribute to the gene pool of those plants, increasing the overall health, variety and survivability of native plants. And native plants are beautiful, adding an authentic and historic look to your yard.

Many native plants are being lost to habitat destruction, invasive plants, and introduced pests and diseases. As a landowner, you can take the following actions to protect and beautify your property with native species:

- Protect already existing native plant communities on your property by learning which species are native and which are invasive. Minimize habitat destruction by controlling soil erosion, loosening soil compaction, and removing invasive species.
- Incorporate new native plants into your landscaping design.
- Protect native plants in the landscape by purchasing your plants rather than removing them from the wild.
- Improve landscaping overall on your property by planting the right plants in the right environment, choosing plants that will grow well on your property, and using organic pest control.
- Swap native plants with neighbors and friends or attend a native plant swap in your community.

For more information on caring for native plants including landscaping tips and learning to identify native species and invasive species, here is a sampling of sources:

### PA:

- DCNR Office of Wild Resource Conservation at 717-783-1639
- The Plants of Pennsylvania by Ann Rhoads and Timothy A. Block
- DCNR Native Plants: [www.dcnr.state.pa.us/Forestry/wildplant/native.aspx](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/Forestry/wildplant/native.aspx)
- PA Native Plant Society: [www.pawildflower.org/04\\_links/links2.htm](http://www.pawildflower.org/04_links/links2.htm)

### NY:

- DEC's Department of Environmental Conservation at 518-402-8013.
- NY Department of Environmental Conservation's plant page: [www.dec.ny.gov/animals/275.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/275.html)
- Designing with Native Plants Conference 2010: Contact Rick Manning, [rmanning@twcnny.rr.com](mailto:rmanning@twcnny.rr.com) or 607-592-4647

For general information on identifying, finding and using native plants visit:

- [www.cluin.org/products/eco restoration/plant.cfm](http://www.cluin.org/products/eco restoration/plant.cfm)
- [www.plants.usda.gov/](http://www.plants.usda.gov/)
- [www.plantnative.org/index.htm](http://www.plantnative.org/index.htm)
- Mistaken Identity: Invasive Plant and Their Native Look-a-Likes: [www.nybg.org/files/scientists/rnaczi/Mistaken\\_Identity\\_Final.pdf](http://www.nybg.org/files/scientists/rnaczi/Mistaken_Identity_Final.pdf)

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Flowering Dogwood  
(*Cornus florida*)  
Photos courtesy of Amanda Subjin



Lady Slipper  
(*Cypripedium acaule*)

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The following nurseries specifically advertise native plants, but visit your local nurseries as well to ask about their native plant inventories:

**EcoScience Wetland Nursery**

RR 4, Box 4294  
Moscow, PA 18444  
717-842-7631

**RPM Ecosystems**

2150 Dryden Road, PO Box 6  
Dryden, NY 13053-9998  
607-844-9590 or  
888-776-9590  
www.rpmecosystems.com

**Yellow Springs Farm**

1165 Yellow Springs Rd.  
Chester Springs, PA 19425  
610-827-2014  
www.yellowspringsfarm.com

**Catskill Native Nursery**

607 Samsonville Rd.  
Kerhonkson, NY 12446  
845-626-2758  
www.catskillnativenursery.com

**Silver Heights Farm**

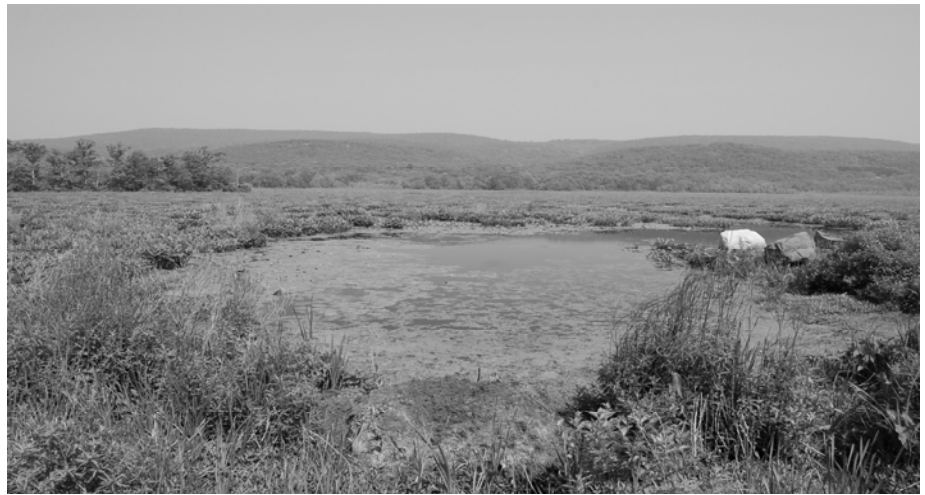
at Gorzynski Farm  
7381 State Route 51  
Callicoon Center, NY 12727  
845-482-3608  
www.silverheightsfarm.com

**Plantmen Nursery**

482 Peruville Rd. (Route 34B)  
Groton, NY 13073  
607-533-7193  
www.plantmen.com



Woodland Sunflower  
(*helianthus divaricatus*)



## CONSERVING CONSERVATION EASEMENTS: ACTIVITIES ON EASEMENT PROTECTED PROPERTIES

Conservation easements protect a property's vital environmental attributes. They are written in partnership with landowners so that the easement protection and the landowners' goals are carefully considered. As a landowner with an easement on your property, whether you placed the easement yourself or purchased a property containing an easement, it is important to check the terms of the easement before proceeding with certain activities. This will help provide you with guidelines for how to proceed and make you aware of limitations that may have been placed on a specific activity you are considering.

- ◆ Always review your easement agreement before exercising a reserved right such as new development or renovation of current infrastructure, or before the signing of any leases or easements (e.g. utility easements) relating to the use of the property, to ensure the proposed activity is permitted.
- ◆ When new development or renovations are permitted, approvals are often needed before proceeding, including instances such as new construction of buildings or roads, timbering (must have a forest management plan in place) and dam construction.
- ◆ When approvals are required, plans describing the proposed activity must be submitted to the Conservancy in the timeframe set forth in your easement.
- ◆ It is important to inform the Conservancy if you plan to sell your property. When the sale is complete, please provide us with the name and address of the new owner. Providing this information is usually a requirement of your easement. Establishing a relationship early on with the new owner provides the Conservancy with an opportunity to establish a good rapport with the new owner, discuss the terms of the easement, and ensure your wishes for your property are upheld.

If you have any questions or are unsure how to proceed with an activity, the Conservancy staff is available to answer any questions you may have and to provide guidance in any way we can. Feel free to contact us at any time in PA at 570-226-3164 or in NY at 845-807-0535.

# THE CONSERVANCY NEEDS YOU

Our region still contains what many areas of the country are struggling to recapture: exceptional water quality, abundant recreational opportunities, scenic beauty, productive forests and working farms. Conservation easements like the one that protects your property and other properties like it are vital tools in maintaining the ecological health and scenic rural character of the Delaware Highlands.

To date, the Conservancy have reached the ambitious goal of protecting over 10,000 acres. We have set a goal for 10,000 more by 2012. This past year, we continued our work with landowners like you who place easements on their properties; awarded another one-thousand dollar scholarship to a local student planning study in an environmental field; opened an office in Sullivan County to better serve the demand for our services in New York; published a *Shop Local Save Land* guide to promote local farms; and significantly expanded our working partnerships with other environmental groups and agencies in New York and Pennsylvania helping us to increase our efficiency and generate awareness.

Help us to continue this essential work. A membership in the Conservancy supports our mission to protect properties like yours and to maintain the scenic rural character and ecological health of our region now and for future generations. It also helps keep our organization strong and poised to deal with easement acquisition and protection far into the future. If you are not already a member of the Conservancy, please join us today. We look forward to welcoming you as our newest member.

## EXTINGUISHING BUILDING ENVELOPES

Did you provide for a building envelope in your easement terms that you no longer need? Did you purchase a property with an easement that allows for a building envelope you now feel is unnecessary? Would you like to reduce the potential for development on your easement property and strengthen you easement? Now is a great time to reduce or extinguish building envelopes. Passage of the 2008 farm bill has established increased tax benefits that, unless they are extended, will sunset at the end of 2009. And when meeting federal requirements, extinguishing your building envelope may provide you with additional income tax or estate tax savings. Call the Conservancy at 570-226-3164 or 845-507-0535 for more information.



## NESTING BIRDS IN YOUR OPEN FIELDS

Spring is the season for nesting birds. Many of the Upper Delaware River region birds, like meadowlarks and song sparrows are field nesters and may be found nesting somewhere in your fields. Follow these easy mowing guidelines to protect nesting birds and keep your property alive with birdsong:

- To keep fields healthiest for birds, mow later in the season, near the end of July.
- Tend fields to remove sapling growth.
- If you must mow earlier in the season, take a walk through fields you plan to mow and note bird activity. If you are flushing birds while walking or notice nests, hold off mowing until the middle of June so birds have the opportunity to fledge.
- Consider a management plan for your fields, especially wet fields that are home to wood cocks.
- For more information visit:
  - ♦ NY DEC bird page at [www.dec.ny.gov/animals/271.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/271.html)
  - ♦ PA Game Commission at [www.pgc.state.pa.us/pgc/cwp/view](http://www.pgc.state.pa.us/pgc/cwp/view)
  - ♦ Call the Audubon Society's Barbara Leo at 570-253-2364 for a guided walk to help identify birds on your property.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **May 30 – Volunteer Training and Open House at Perry Pond, Lava, NY, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm**

Join us at Perry Pond. Volunteers, learn how you can help the Conservancy with field work and more. This program will include an overview of the Delaware Highlands Conservancy along with an introduction to Conservation Easements, Baseline Documentation, annual monitoring, and a tour of the property, 100 acres protected with a conservation easement, and meet other landowners like you.

### **June 20 – Improving Wildlife Habitat Location: Mink Pond Club, Lehman Township, Pike County 8:30am - 12:30pm**

In May of 2004, the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) created a Private Landowner Assistance Program and hired regional wildlife diversity biologists to aid interested landowners in developing habitat management plans. Join forest landowners at Mink Pond Club, a property with a PGC habitat management plan, and learn about options for improving wildlife habitat in your forestland.

### **September 12 – Estate Planning Workshop, Cornell Cooperative Extension, time TBA**

This workshop will discuss the conservation easements in association with estate planning. Representatives from Cornell Cooperative Extension Elder Law Department will be available for questions.

### **Oct 24 – Fuelwood Harvesting and Chainsaw Maintenance, Milford Experimental Forest, 8:30 am - 12:30 pm**

Join woodland owners for a hands-on look at harvesting fuel wood from your property. (Women and their Woods participants should bring a bag lunch and stay for additional programming regarding planning for 2010.) Registration is required. Please call the Conservancy to reserve your spot.

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