



# 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Lahr Symposium

# Native Plants

## From the Wild to the Garden

U.S. National Arboretum  
Administration Building Auditorium  
Saturday, March 25, 2023

# SCHEDULE

- 8:15**      **Registration Check-In & Plant Sale**
- 9:30**      **Welcome and Introductions**  
Richard Olsen, Director, U.S. National Arboretum  
Sarah Strickler, Education Specialist, U.S. National Arboretum
- 9:40**      **Restoring Grasslands in the Virginia Piedmont: What and Where They Are and Why They Matter**  
Devin Floyd
- 10:45**      **Refreshment Break**
- 11:00**      **Natives in Design from Formal to Naturalistic**  
Carolyn Summers
- 12:05**      **Lunch & Native Plant Sale**  
  
Concurrent Sessions
- Meet the North American Trees and Shrubs in the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum (tour)**  
Andrew Bello
- 1:30**      **Scalable Strategies for Resilient Landscapes**  
Leirion Sorensen and Nathan Shampine
- Conserving the Serpentine Ecosystem at Soldier's Delight**  
Paula Becker
- 2:35**      **Close to His Heart: George Washington's Use of Indigenous Trees and Shrubs at Mount Vernon**  
Dean Norton
- 3:45**      **Adjourn**

# PROGRAM

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Devin Floyd

## Restoring Grasslands in the Virginia Piedmont: What and Where They Are and Why They Matter

9:40 a.m.

**Hiding in thousands of small and forgotten places are the remnants of a rich, pre-settlement natural world that provides hope for and insight into a future of greater biological diversity. These are the grasslands of the Piedmont, reduced in size and suppressed for centuries but not lost. Devin Floyd reveals how old growth remains of this patchwork of scrubby woodlands, savannas, and prairies are inspiring new research and protections while informing the preservation and renewal of grasslands on degraded landscapes. Learn how these habitats are being rediscovered and how landowners can contribute.**

Devin Floyd is the Principal Investigator at the Center for Urban Habitats in Charlottesville, Virginia. Devin provides expertise and leadership in the natural resources community for the inventory, monitoring, restoration, and management of ecological systems. He received a degree in Prehistoric Archaeology from James Madison University and has since worked in multiple fields of cultural and natural history. In 2007, he co-founded the Blue Ridge Discovery Center and is currently engaged in founding the Piedmont Discovery Center.

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**Discover how native plants can be used in a variety of garden situations from formal front yards to more naturalistic mixed borders. Carolyn Summers shows us how to combine plants for seasonal color and texture, the impact of plant choices on architecture, and the importance of maintenance. Sharing vignettes of private and public gardens, she will inspire you to experiment with a broader native plant palette. No matter the aesthetic you desire, find out which perennials, shrubs, trees, and even garden structures can help you achieve your dream landscape.**

Carolyn Summers

## Natives in Design from Formal to Naturalistic

11 a.m.

Carolyn Summers is a landscape designer with over 30 years of experience with native plants. She is the author of *Designing Gardens with Flora of the American East*, coming in a revised addition this fall. As the first Director of Natural Resources with New York City's Department of Environmental Protection, she implemented a new native plants policy across the agency. Currently, she teaches for Go Native U at Westchester Community College in Valhalla, New York, and manages Flying Trillium Gardens & Preserve in the southern Catskills, where gardeners can be inspired to use native plants in their own designs..

Andrew Bello

**Meet the North American Trees and Shrubs in the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum**

1:30 p.m.

Concurrent Session

**Take a walk through the North American Pavilion with Andrew Bello to learn how these trees began life as potted specimens and discover some of the different styles of bonsai and penjing, such as forest planting, root over rock, and cascade. From coastal redwood to buttonwood, American beech to white cedar, you will discover the beauty of this ancient Asian art form and how it can educate and inspire us to conserve our own native trees and the habitats where they are found.**

Andrew Bello served as the First Curator's Apprentice at the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum before becoming Assistant Curator in 2020. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Natural Resources from the University of Arizona. While working in Oregon designing and installing native-focused landscapes, Andrew discovered the art of bonsai. He still cares for his first bonsai, a Japanese maple. Besides highlighting Chinese and Japanese techniques, Andrew enjoys using native plants for bonsai to inspire the public to appreciate our indigenous trees.

**Ensuring habitats are resilient against disease, climate impacts, and human use is complicated. Nevertheless, whether a landscape is formal, naturalistic, or wild, similar philosophies can be applied to achieve more sustainable ecosystems. Leirion Sorensen and Nathan Champine show us how Mt. Cuba Center in Hockessin, Delaware, uses the concept of scale to dictate goals and overall strategies for restoration projects, new plantings, and ongoing maintenance. Discover various approaches for deciding what to plant, where to plant, how to manage landscapes, and more.**

Leirion Sorensen & Nathan Champine

**Scalable Strategies for Resilient Landscapes**

1:30 p.m.

Concurrent Session

Leirion Sorensen is the Gardens Manager at Mt. Cuba Center, a role ideally suited to her passion for preserving the natural environment and creating awe-inspiring outdoor spaces. She has worked in the horticultural industry for more than twenty-five years and received her degree in Ornamental Horticulture from Delaware Valley University.

Nathan Champine is Mt. Cuba Center's Natural Lands Manager, responsible for implementing land conservation practices and developing healthy and functional ecosystems. He is a graduate of the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry. He is also a Certified Ecological Restoration Practitioner through the Society for Ecological Restoration.

Paula Becker

**Conserving  
the Serpentine  
Ecosystem at  
Soldier's Delight**

1:30 p.m.

Concurrent Session

**Soldier's Delight Natural Environment Area (NEA) in Baltimore County, Maryland, is the largest remaining serpentine ecosystem in the eastern United States and a biodiversity hotspot. It is underlain by serpentinite, an oceanic rock, resulting in shallow soils with high levels of magnesium and low nutrient levels. Despite these seemingly inhospitable growing conditions, many plant and animal species thrive in Soldier's Delight's oak savannas—asters, prairie grasses, dragonflies, butterflies, and other rare and endangered species. Paula Becker describes the multi-decade efforts to conserve what the English settlers called "barrens" to its pre-European settlement state by removing invasive species, using prescribed burns, and restoring 1000 acres to this significant ecosystem.**

Paula Becker has been an ecologist with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Natural Heritage Program, for over twenty-five years. Her current duties include volunteer coordination and outreach for the state's non-game and endangered species program as well as rare species surveys and habitat restoration. Paula holds a dual Bachelor of Science degree in Forest Biology and Resource Management from the State University of New York College of Environmental Sciences and Forestry.

**"We rode through a grove of sugar trees and for the best part of the day we admired the beauty of the trees and the richness of the land," wrote a sixteen-year-old George Washington of a trip to the Ohio River Valley. At the conclusion of the Revolutionary War nearly forty years later, Washington set about relandscaping his country seat at Mount Vernon. Dean Norton explores how Washington's love of trees and attitude towards conservation informed his decisions. Using both natives dug from the surrounding forest and those acquired from across the new nation, either given by friends or purchased at the principal nurseries of the day, Washington highlighted the ornamental beauty of new world plants while many of his peers remained attached to European species.**

Dean Norton

**Close to His Heart:  
George Washington's  
use of Indigenous  
Trees and Shrubs at  
Mount Vernon**

2:35 p.m.

Dean Norton is the Director of Horticulture at George Washington's Mount Vernon in Alexandria, Virginia. He began working at Mount Vernon in high school and never left. Currently, he is responsible for applying the latest plant science and horticultural management techniques to this historic site. For almost fifty-four years, Dean has been researching 18<sup>th</sup>-century gardens and gardening practices. The recipient of numerous awards, including the Garden Clubs of America's prestigious Elizabeth Craig Weaver Proctor National Medal, Dean was awarded an honorary doctorate from Washington College.

3.25.2023

# WHO IS KAY LAHR?<sup>6</sup>

George and Kay Lahr were remarkable supporters of the National Arboretum, having first discovered it through their memberships in the National Capital Area Federation of Garden Clubs and the Men's Garden Club of Montgomery County. Both were regular volunteers in the early days of Fern Valley, but it was Kay who made a most-extraordinary commitment to the collection and to the Arboretum.

From about 1960 through 1985, Kay could be found at the Arboretum five days a week. Whether she was illustrating an Arboretum publication, creating a display for Fern Valley, working in the Arbor House Gift Shop, or gardening in the Old Country Garden, Kay contributed to the Arboretum every day. It comes as no surprise that, for twenty-five years, she was an exceedingly popular tour guide.

After Kay's death in 1986, the Lahrs' friends created a fellowship for the Fern Valley Native Plant Collection to commemorate the couple's longstanding dedication to the Arboretum. The first Lahr Symposium was held that year. The spirit of generosity that the Lahrs engendered continues today through the contributions of so many who continue to make this annual symposium and the Fern Valley internship possible.

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## REGISTRATION

Click [here](#) to register.

Registration includes all sessions, morning coffee and refreshments, and box lunch.

Registration fee: \$100  
FONA members: \$80

We are not able to accept checks at this time. Sorry, no refunds will be given for cancellations received after March 22, 2023. For more information, please email [programs@usna.usda.gov](mailto:programs@usna.usda.gov).

## Native Plant Sale

The annual Native Plant Sale, sponsored by the Friends of the National Arboretum, will take place on Saturday, March 25, 2023 from 8:15 a.m.–2 p.m.

The sale will be located on Meadow Road adjacent to the Herb Garden Entrance. Symposium attendees will have the opportunity to shop the sale during the lunch break, but consider visiting early for the best selection!