

Seed College – Deeply Rooted in Native Seed Propagation

Welcome!
We will begin shortly



January Garden Chat

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Photo: Marlene Smith

Photo: Lynne Wheeler

Seed College – Deeply Rooted in Native Seed Propagation

Marlene Smith
President, Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay
Univ of MD Extension Master Gardener
Xerces Ambassador

Lynne Wheeler
Membership Chair, Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay
Membership Chair, Southern Maryland Audubon
Secretary, Port Tobacco River Conservancy

January 28, 2025



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Wild Ones

- Promotes the use of native plants through local and national educational programs.
- 129 chapters in 36 states!
- Go online to join a chapter near you join.wildones.org



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Wild Ones Chapters in MD

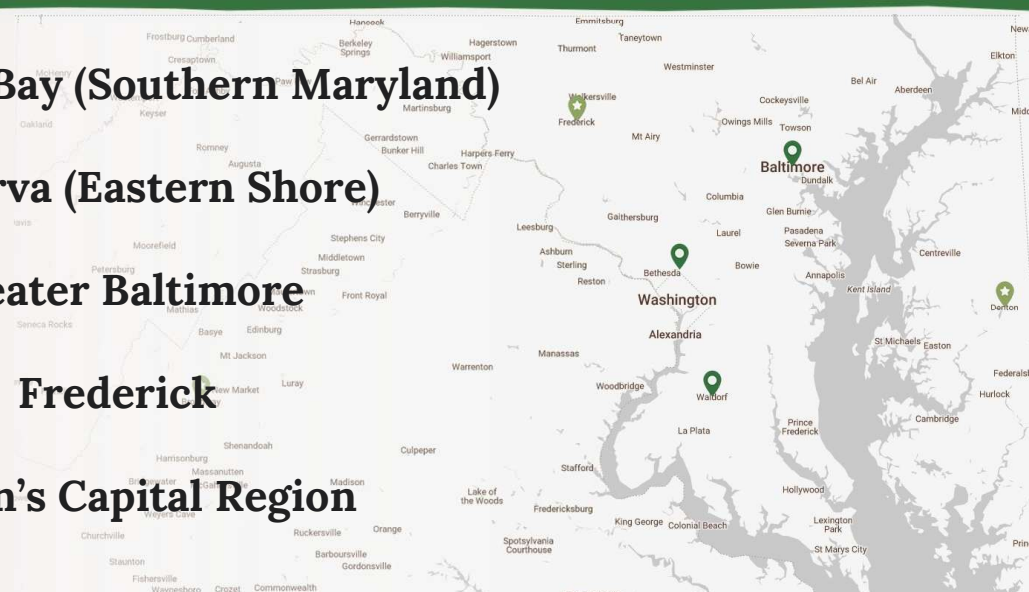
Chesapeake Bay (Southern Maryland)

Delmarva (Eastern Shore)

Greater Baltimore

Frederick

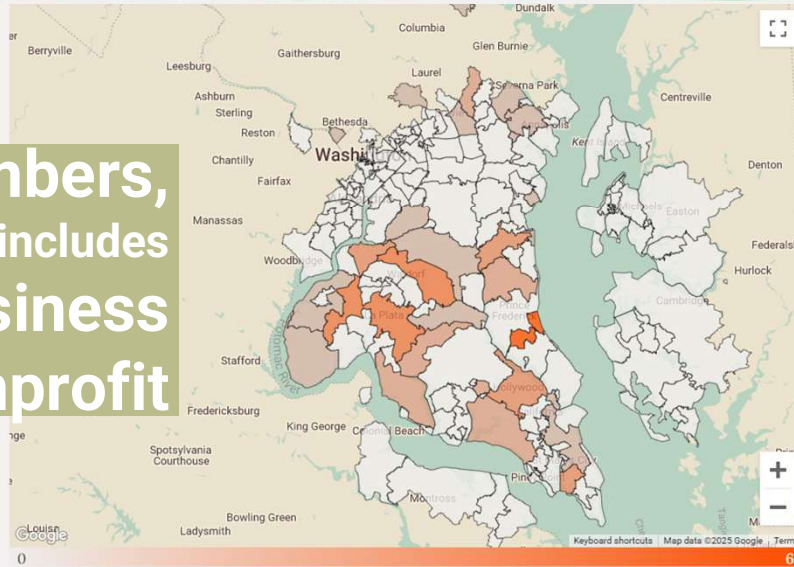
Nation's Capital Region



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Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay

74 Members,
which includes
3 Business
1 Nonprofit



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Agenda

- **Why propagate native plants from seeds?**
- **What's in a seed?**
- **It All Starts with Viable Seeds**
- **What Seeds Need to Germinate**
- **Breaking dormancy - To stratify or not to stratify**
- **Let's Get Started! General Supplies**
- **General Procedure**
- **Levels 100, 200, 300, 400**
- **Additional information**
- **Resources**

Photo: Lynne Wheeler

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Why propagate native plants from seeds?

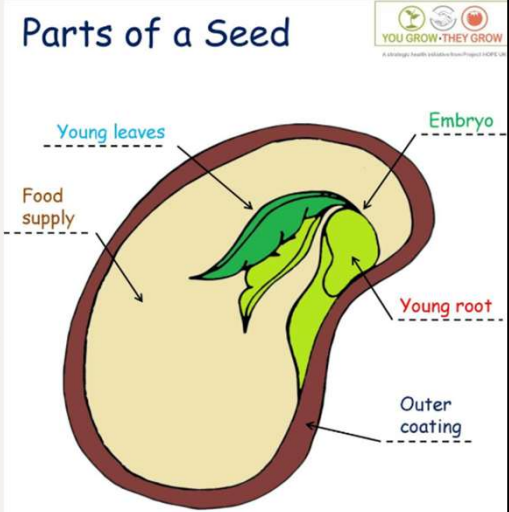
- Native plants are adapted to our environment
- Provide native habitat for insects/birds/other wildlife
- Provide food for caterpillars and other insects
- Connect us with history & local cultures
- Preserves local ecotype genetic diversity
- Provide access to hard-to-find plant species
- Educational (full life cycle from seed to seed)
- Easy, anyone can do it
- Economical, budget-friendly way to get new plants
- Fun hobby (therapeutic/potentially addictive)
- Supports the Wild Ones vision of “Native plants and natural landscapes thriving in every community.”

Photo: Lynne Wheeler

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What's in a seed?

- **Seeds are living things! Inside every seed is an embryonic plant and a starchy food supply—everything needed to make a new plant!**
- However, they are living in a dormant (resting) state which means that they require very little resources to stay alive until the ideal conditions for their growth occur.
- The first leaves are called cotyledons and don't usually look anything like the “true leaves” that come later. Most plants are dicots and have 2 seed leaves.
- The true leaves allow the plant to breathe, taking in carbon dioxide and sending out oxygen.



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It All Starts with Viable Seeds

Perennials, biennials, annuals, grasses, vines, trees, shrubs

- **Our focus today: dry seeds that bloom in summer/autumn**
- Dry before storing; can be stored with dry chaff
- **Avoid** moisture, air, light, warmth
- **Avoid** rapid or frequent changes in temperature or humidity
- Best conditions for storage are a cool, dark, dry location
- Short term storage: use paper envelopes
- Long term storage: use airtight containers such as glass jars, plastic jars, zipper plastic bags, etc.
- Protect against bugs/rodents
- Seed viability decreases over time



Check out our "Deeply Rooted in Native Seed Collecting" presentation



Photos: Marlene Smith



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Breaking Dormancy – To Stratify or Not to Stratify

- Many, but not all, native plant seeds need to go through winter weather before they will germinate. This process is called 'cold, moist stratification' (CMS), or is sometimes referred to as 'pre-treatment'.
- You can simulate CMS (artificially stratify) native seeds by placing them in a slightly moistened medium in the fridge. The species and seed type dictates how long you will need to refrigerate.
- CMS may increase germination even of those that don't need CMS



Photo: Bill Smith

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What Seeds Need to Germinate



- **Water** - Without water, seeds will remain dormant. The amount of water is critical; too much causes seeds to rot, and too little causes embryos to die.



- **Oxygen** - Seeds consume oxygen and release carbon dioxide. Seed-starting media needs to drain well enough to meet this need for oxygen.



- **Temperature** - Temperature affects the number of seeds that germinate as well as how fast the seeds germinate.



- **Light** - Some seeds require light to germinate, while others require darkness. Some seeds have no preference at all.

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Let's Get Started! Gather Supplies

- **Seeds**
- **Containers** (method dependent)
- **Growing medium** (soilless seed starting mix or potting mix)
- **Bucket or tray** for mixing soil
- **Water** for mixing soil and misting/sprinkling seeds
- **Trowel**
- **Plant labels**, popsicle, craft sticks
- **Marker** (waterproof, UV resistant)



Photo: Marlene Smith

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Containers

- Flats
- Plug trays (no root disturbance; no spread of damping off)
- Germination trays
- Quart pots
- Milk jugs or other containers
- Homemade options like wooden flats, large 3-gallon pot cut in half (use bottom)



Photo: Marlene Smith

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Growing medium – Seed starting mix vs Potting mix

Seed Starting Mix

- Soilless, sterile, lightweight and free from weed seeds, with a texture and porosity especially suited to germinating seeds
- Typically contains peat, perlite, wetting agent, and starter fertilizer

Potting Mix/Potting Soil

- May contain organic material – compost, sometimes soil
- Typically has a coarser texture, often containing larger pieces of organic material like bark or sticks

Avoid

- ✗ Mixes that say “weed free”; they may contain germination inhibitors.
- ✗ Mixes with moisture retention crystals. Proper moisture of growing mix is important. Too wet and seeds can rot; too dry and they won't germinate.
- ✗ Garden soil, it's too dense, may contain weed seeds.



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General Procedure

- **Prepare containers/labels**
- **Prepare growing mix**
- **Fill containers**
- **Sow seeds**
 - Plant only one type of seed per container
 - For most native seeds, sprinkle on top of mixture & press into mixture. Many need light to germinate. Do not cover with soil.
 - Tiny seeds- optional to mix with an inert material (grow mix, coarse builders' sand, vermiculite) to help with even distribution
 - Larger seeds—typically plant the depth of the seed
- **Water seeds thoroughly into growing mix**
- **Place in appropriate location and wait**

Photo: Marlene Smith

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Level 100 - Direct sowing outside in winter

- Provides natural stratification
- Sowing into snow makes it easier to see where you spread seeds, so you get a nice even distribution of your mix.
- Broadcast seeds right on top of the snow, but the key is to sow on the right kind of snow- fluffy, damp, packable snow. This way the seed will slightly sink into the snow.
- Avoid sowing seed on top of icy, crusty snow or it will blow around easily in the wind.



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Level 200 – “Seed Sitting” vs “Winter Sowing”

- Sowing seeds outside provides cold moist stratification naturally
- Protects seeds from being washed away or eaten by wildlife
- Reduces competition from weeds
- Produces strong healthy plants
- No hardening off period
- Reduces need for watering
- Seeds will sprout when Mother Nature determines conditions are right
- It's not an early germination method



“Seed sitting” - sowing in open containers
Coined in 2020 by the Project Swallowtail Team in Toronto



Winter sowing - sowing in protective, vented containers
Coined in 2000 by Trudi Davidoff

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Deeply Rooted in Winter Sowing

A method to grow hardy native plants from seed

- 1 Collect & wash jugs. Discard caps. 
- 2 Punch 4-6 drainage holes in the bottom. 
- 3 Cut jug in half leaving a hinge at the handle. 
- 4 Label outside with weather resistant marker. 
Recommended: Also label a plastic plant stake to place in soil
- 5 Put 3-4 inches of pre-moistened grow mix in bottom of jug. 
- 6 Scatter seeds on top of grow mix and press in lightly. Carefully water to ensure contact w/ soil. 
- 7 Tape the jug closed with painter's or duct tape. 
- 8 Set jugs outside where rain & snow can enter top. Water if needed. 
- 9 Open jug in spring after seeds sprout & danger of frost ends. 
- 10 Up-pot or plant when seedlings are at least 2" tall. Keep watered & enjoy your homegrown plants! 

When: Beginning on the winter solstice

Additional supplies: Something to create drainage holes and cut the jug; tape

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Collect & wash jugs. Discard caps.



- Any transparent (clear) or translucent (cloudy) container that can hold growing mix and be covered to provide a protective, vented environment can be used
- Wash & rinse to remove milk or food residue.
- Remember: natives need a minimum of 3-4 inches of potting mix to allow root development

Photos: Marlene Smith



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Punch 4-6 drainage holes in the bottom.



- Using knife or scissors, make 4-6 holes in bottom of container
- Optional tools: drill, hot glue gun, or soldering iron



Photos: Marlene Smith



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- Cut around jug, leaving a 4" bottom and a hinge under the handle.
- Remove and discard cap.



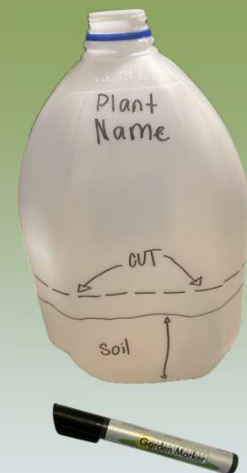
Photos: Marlene Smith



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- Use UV-resistant markers, grease pencils/china marker, paint pens on outside
- Use a popsicle stick or plant marker inside the jug
- Optional: Label the bottom with duct tape and waterproof marker



Photos: Marlene Smith



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Put 3-4 inches of pre-moistened grow mix in bottom of jug.



- Premoisten growing mix by adding warm water until thoroughly damp but not soaking wet (holds together like a snowball)
- Optional: Add a water-permeable barrier (coffee filter, landscape fabric, or newspaper) to bottom of jug before adding growing mix (keeps soil in and slugs out)
- Add approx 3-4 inches of mix to container
- Tap container and/or press lightly to settle the mix and remove large air pockets

Photos: Marlene Smith



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Scatter seeds on top of grow mix and press in lightly. Carefully water to ensure contact w/ soil.



- Plant only one type of seed in a jug.
- For most native seeds, sprinkle on top of mixture & press lightly into mixture. Many native seeds need light to germinate. Do not cover.
- Larger seeds—follow instructions on packet for depth
- Water seeds into soil thoroughly to ensure good seed to soil contact



Photos: Marlene Smith

Photos: Marlene Smith



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Tape the jug closed with painter's or duct tape.



Use whatever tape you have on hand

- Duct tape
- Packing tape
- Painters' tape
- Freezer tape
- Masking tape
- Electrical tape



Photos: Marlene Smith



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Set jugs outside where rain & snow can enter top. Water if needed.



- Reminder! CAPS OFF
- Place in protected area safe from disturbance
- Keep in shade/part sun
- Do not place under eaves, covers or decks that prevent rain from entering top
- Do NOT bring indoors!



Photos: Marlene Smith



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Placement of containers matters!

Two containers of Joe Pye planted January 14, 2022

Note the difference in the photos taken on March 20, two months after winter sowing



Location:
Sunny, south wall
Germination:
1 month
At time of photo: 1-month old seedlings



Location:
Shady steps
Germination:
2 months
At time of photo: cotyledons

Photos: Marlene Smith

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Don't plant & forget: Check jugs weekly

Seeds put down roots first which we can't see.
This is the critical time not to allow seeds to dry out.

Too dry

- Jug feels light when lifted
- Mixture looks crumbly & dry
- Condensation may be lacking
- Solution: Bottom water, or spray or mist water into opening (don't pour)

Too wet

- Jug feels heavy when lifted
- Mixture looks waterlogged
- Green algae on surfaces
- Solution: Add more drainage holes along side, or if not below freezing, open jug for a day or two to dry out



Photos: Marlene Smith

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Open jug in spring
after seeds sprout &
danger of frost
ends.



- After germination, keep seedlings moist!
- For unexpected warm spells, open containers and/or move to the shade.
- After opening, water well and close containers if expecting a freeze.
- Wait for at least 1-2 sets of true leaves to appear or until seedlings are 2 inches tall to transplant.

Photos: Marlene Smith



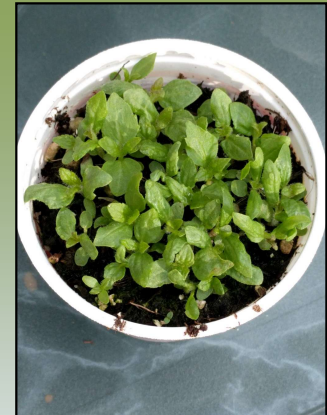
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Up-pot or plant
when seedlings
are at least 2" tall.
Keep watered & enjoy
your homegrown
plants!



Not ready to transplant,
Cotyledons



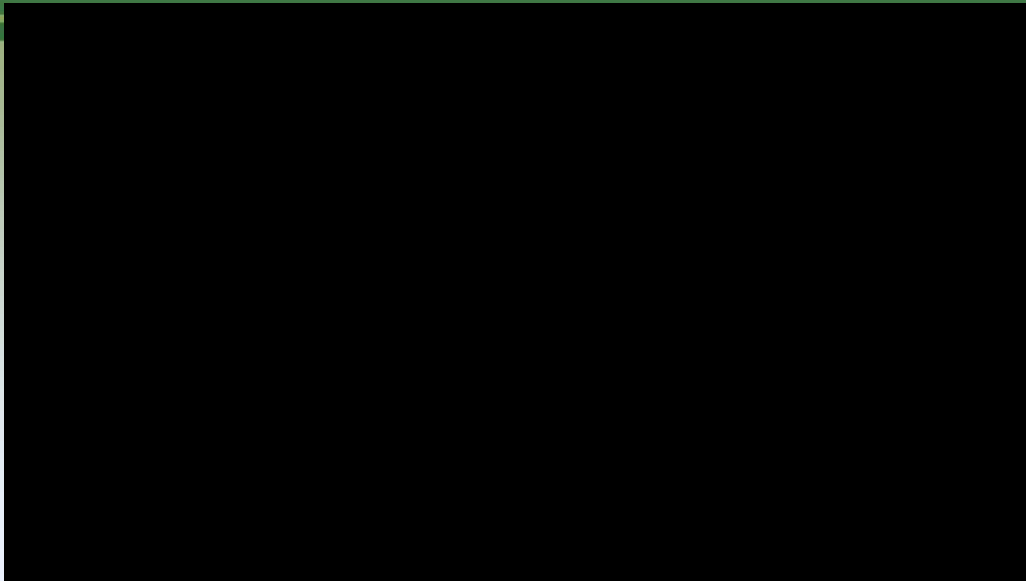
Ready to transplant when
2 sets of leaves or 2" tall

Photos: Marlene Smith



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Winter sowing demo



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Level 300 – Sowing Inside

- In the house, a hoophouse, or greenhouse
- Requires artificial stratification (refrigerator)
- Optional supplies: Artificial lights, heat mats, timer, oscillating fan



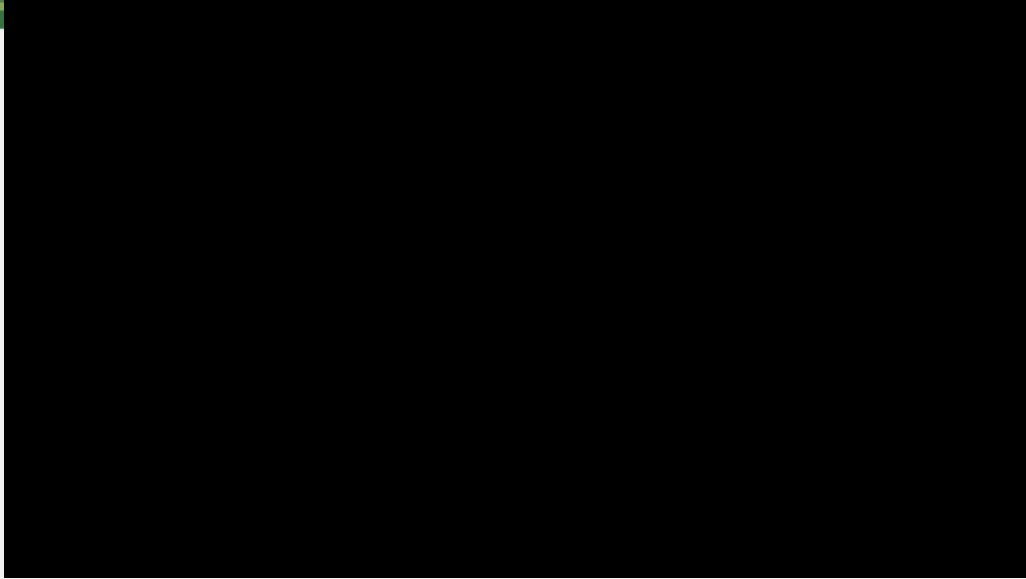
Photo: Bill Smith



Photo: Marlene Smith

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Greenhouse seed sowing demo



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Indoor Seed Starting Light Requirements

- Providing the right intensity, duration and spectrum of light is essential for starting seeds indoors.
 - Interior windows will not grow strong seedlings. Not enough light hours (intensity or duration).
 - Modern window coatings can inhibit growth (spectrum). The results are weak and leggy seedlings.
- Fluorescent or LED shop lights are perfect for seed starting. An expensive “grow light” isn’t required.
- Intensity (or brightness) is measured in Lumens. Choose a shop light with a minimum 2000 Lumens.
- Light reduces quickly as distance increases. Keep lights 2-3” above seedlings.
- Seedlings need 14-16 hours of light to grow. They also need 8 hours of darkness to rest.



Photo: Marlene Smith



Photo: Lynne Wheeler

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Seedling Care for Inside Sowing



- **Watering** - Wait until the top of your growing medium is nearly dry before watering. Bottom water to prevent over saturation. The goal is to keep the root systems supplied with water and oxygen. If containers are too wet, damping-off fungi can quickly kill seedlings.
- **Ventilation** - Use a small fan to toughen up your seedlings.
- **Fertilizing** - If your seed starting mix doesn't contain fertilizer, apply a half strength liquid fertilizer to seedlings once true leaves have formed. Fertilize weekly until hardening off your seedlings.

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Why didn't my seeds germinate?

- Some seeds may have been immature when collected.
- Seeds may have dried out or rotted.
- Seeds may not have gotten enough cold moist stratification.
- Some native seeds require double dormancy.
- If space permits, leave containers in shade during the upcoming seasons; they may germinate next year.



Jeffersonia diphylla
Twinleaf



Lonicera sempervirens
Coral honeysuckle



Sanguinaria canadensis
Bloodroot

Double dormancy

Arisaema triphyllum, Jack-in-the-pulpit
Claytonia virginica, Virginia spring beauty
Dicentra cucullaria, Dutchman's breeches
Erythronium albidum, White trout lily
Hepatica acutiloba, Sharp-lobed hepatica
Jeffersonia diphylla, Twinleaf
Lonicera sempervirens, Coral honeysuckle
Sanguinaria canadensis, Bloodroot

Photos: Marlene Smith and Sue Williams

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Pot up seedlings for greater survival or long-term holding



Seeds were sown in flats in a hoophouse and transplanted to plug trays to grow



Asimina triloba, Paw paw



Callicarpa americana, Beautyberry

Seeds were sown in milk jugs and transplanted to 1-quart pots to grow for a year before planting in the ground

Photos: Marlene Smith

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Methods of transplanting

Seeds spaced evenly can be easily cut or pulled apart



Photo: Marlene Smith

Photo: Wild Seed Project

Seeds sprinkled can be cut into brownie-style hunks and planted as hunks



Photo: Marlene Smith

Photo: Wild Seed Project

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Provide shade when transplanting

- Transplanting disturbs roots, which in turn affects water absorption necessary for photosynthesis & cooling
- Work in a cool, shady place to prevent roots from getting hot or drying out
- Provide shade for the first 1-2 weeks after transplanting
- If seedlings start to wilt in the sun, keep in shade longer



Photo: Biol Smith

Advice was taken from the Bona Terra Seedling Division video:



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Level 400 – Commercial Growers

- Sowing in a greenhouse, hoop house, or high tunnel using flats, plug trays, quarts, seedling trays, or other containers
- Artificial stratification (refrigerator); allows flexibility on when to sow

Bona Terra

- Local ecotype native seeds (LENS)
- Custom-made soil (decomposed wood chips, biochar, and sand)
- Artificial stratification in vermiculite
- Sown heavily in quart pots
- Transplanted to plug trays to grow/sell

Jeremy's Pot
Filling DemoBona Terra Discussion
with Jeremy Tidd

Photo: Marlene Smith

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Level 400 – Commercial Growers



Photo: WoodThrush Nurseries

WoodThrush Nurseries

- Usually starts heating up of their greenhouse in February for germination & growth in March
- Division & potting in April
- Plants ready to sell in May

Presentation by Ian Canton where he demonstrates his processes for seed collecting and propagation at WoodThrush Nurseries
https://youtu.be/FBhj_DTpEas?si=J7pnp7i2MQIHCsaN



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Our vision:

“Native plants and natural landscapes thriving in every community.”

Propagating plants is NOT enough! The goal of propagating should be sharing plants to get more native plants in the ground.

- Share with family and friends
- Swap with others
- Donate to your local native gardens at schools, community gardens, etc
- Sell plants for nonprofit fundraising

Photos: Marlene Smith



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Resources

Sources for checking native status

Maryland Plant Atlas - www.MarylandPlantAtlas.org

Maryland Biodiversity Project - <https://www.marylandbiodiversity.com/>

Biota of North America Program (BONAP) - <http://www.bonap.org/>

Seed sources

Bona Terra (Maryland LENS)

Chesapeake Natives (Maryland LENS)

ArcheWild (Pennsylvania)

Brandywine Conservancy (Pennsylvania)

Ernst Seeds (Pennsylvania)

WoodThrush Natives (Virginia)

Toadshade Wildflower Farm (New Jersey)

Roundstone Native Seeds (Kentucky)

Greenhouse suppliers (to follow)

Soil mixes (to follow)

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Questions?

We'd appreciate your feedback. Please scan the QR code to take our survey.




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Chapter Updates

Photo: Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay

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Our Work – Community Engagement

Collaborations and partnerships we plan to grow in 2025



NatureFest

College of Southern Maryland –
Workshops - seed cleaning, winter sowing
Seed Library - opening in March
NatureFest - May 31, 10 am – 2 pm



Building Habitat for
Native Bees

Wild Ones & Nurture Natives –
Building Habitat for Native Bees

Front Yard –
cosponsoring library programs

At the Front Yard Spring 2025

Leonardtown Library, Friends of St Clements Bay
Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay

Saturday 1/18
10:30-Noon
"All the Dirt on Winter Sowing" with Marlene Smith (Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay) and Molly Moore (Southern Maryland Audubon Society). Grow your own native plants from seeds!

Saturday 2/15
2-3 PM
"Get Ready to Garden" Sharpen up your pruning skills as Chris Pax, designer of the Front Yard gardens, shares techniques to keep native plant "woodies" healthy and beautiful.

Friday 3/28
1-2 PM
"Drip Irrigation" An efficient and affordable strategy for keeping home gardens well hydrated through the droughts of late summer and early fall. Learn how-to from Ben Beale, UMD Extension.

Saturday 4/26
9:30-3PM
"Tile Making Workshop" with Parran Coltery, Eartha Handmade Tile. Create a unique terra cotta tile for your garden with the creator of the Front Yard Mosaic Sculptures.

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Our Work – Public Outreach/Tabling



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Our Work – Public Outreach/Education



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Our Work – Public Outreach/Education



Display Case
Calvert County Public
Library
Twin Beaches Branch

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Our Work – Past Events



Seeds & Swag Social
December 7, 2024

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Our Work – Media and Awards

We want to celebrate you!

If you are recognized for activities in the community or receive an award, we'd like to know.

We'll keep a running blog on our website and share with Wild Ones National and on our social media!



Community Outreach and Education

Informal conversations in the garden, library Workshops, tabling at community events and working with local students and scout groups all contribute to growing understanding of the role native plant stewardship can play in the health of the watershed.

Third Annual Native Plant Swap and Meet the Mosaics: over 100 visitors gathered at the Front Yard to celebrate and share native plants



Engaging young people: FSCB works with hundreds of students throughout St. Mary's County



New Blog Post

Media and Awards 2024



TEDx Hagerstown Women



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Our Work – Lobbying and Advocacy



Climate Action

Climate action projects aim to respond and reduce the impacts of climate change in communities across Charles County.

PROPOSED RULE
 Endangered and Threatened Species: Species Status w Designation of Critical Habitat
 Agency Fish and Wildlife Service | Posted Dec 12, 2024 | ID FWS-R
[Open for Comments](#)
 Comment Period Ends: **Mar 12, 2025 at 11:59 PM EDT**

Charles County Climate Action Plan

You are invited to participate in the Climate Action Plan process! Two surveys are currently active on the Charles County Engage page related to public outreach scheduling and soliciting general input on climate action planning priorities. Both surveys should take no more than a few minutes of your time to complete.



Endangered and Threatened Species/Monarch Butterfly

The USFWS is accepting public comments on the December 12, 2024, proposed listing of the monarch butterfly as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The 90-day comment period ends on March 12, 2025.



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Our Work – Community Science



Phenology is the study of seasonal events in nature such as flowers, fruits, and leaf color change. Each photo of a plant contains critical information about the presence or absence of flowers, fruits, and leaves. We need you to help unlock those insights! Even when you aren't out making observations, you can make a big difference by adding annotations.

In this webinar, they covered:

- Why phenology is so important
- Examples of phenology research using iNaturalist data
- How you can help by adding flower and leaf annotations



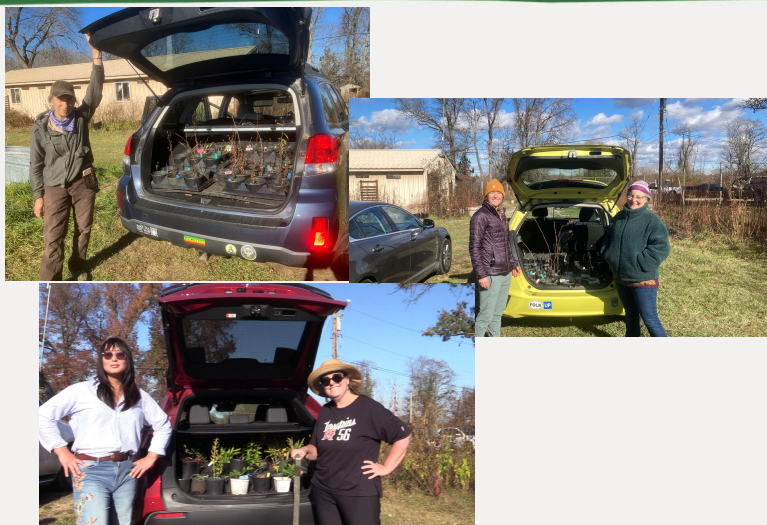
View the recording



View the slides

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Our Work – Native Plants and Seeds



Partnering with RePollinate Anne Arundel for plant distribution at the USGS Bee Lab



Supporting seed libraries at the St. Mary's Public Libraries and at College of Southern Maryland

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Member Insights

**Wild Ones promotes native landscapes through 3 strategic pillars:
education, advocacy and collaborative action**

What would you like to see from the WO Chesapeake Bay Chapter in 2025?

What tools and resources would help further your native plant journey?

What other local organizations are you aware of to enhance collaborative efforts
for native landscaping initiatives?

| Education | Advocacy | Collaboration |

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Save the Dates

- Saturday, February 1, 10:00 – 2:00 pm
MNPS Field Trip: Winter Tree ID
 Kings Landing Park
 3255 Kings Landing Road,
 Huntingtown, MD 20639
- Friday, February 14, 1:00 – 3:00 pm
Seed Saving Workshop
 College of Southern Maryland, La Plata
- Saturday, February 22, 2:00 – 4:00 pm
All the Dirt on Winter Sowing
 St. Mary's Public Library – Lexington Park
- Tuesday, February 27, 7:00 pm
Community Gardens presentation by Jimmy Rogers
 Co-sponsored with Wild Ones Greater Baltimore
 Virtual/Zoom
- Saturday, March 1, 10:00 – 1:00 pm
Satellite Seedling Giveaway Workshop
 Bona Terra Nursery, Indian Head



<https://chesapeakebay.wildones.org/chapter-calendar/>



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Wild Ones and the PlantArte Native Plant Art Contest

PlantArte Call for Native Plant Art!

<p>Wildflowers <i>Flores silvestres</i></p> <p>Resilience <i>Resiliencia</i></p> <p>Plants & critters <i>Plantas y fauna</i></p>	<p>Endangered plants <i>Plantas en peligro</i></p> <p>Plants of my people <i>Las plantas de mi gente</i></p> <p>Native plants beyond borders <i>Plantas nativas más allá de la frontera</i></p>
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Art submission deadline: 4/2/25

<p>Pyrography</p>	<p>Seed mandala</p>	<p>Charcoal</p>
<p>Paint</p>	<p>Textile</p>	<p>Tattoo design</p>

- Embroidery
- Plant fiber
- Weaving
- Rock
- Metal
- Leather
- Clay
- Cyanotype
- Felted wool

Wild Ones is proud to be a native plant art exhibit partner for the PlantArte Native Plant Art Contest, an initiative that celebrates the beauty and importance of native plants through artistic expression.

By collaborating on this event, Wild Ones furthers its mission of promoting native landscapes through education, advocacy, and collaborative action.

The contest not only raises awareness about native plants but also fosters community engagement, inspiring participants to connect with the natural world in creative and meaningful ways.

Scan the QR code for more information

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Wild Ones Free Webinar



Thursday, February 20, 2025
7pm EST (6pm CST)

"Bees Beyond Honey: Understanding the Roles of Native and Managed Bees in Pollination," featuring Sam Droege, Wildlife Biologist, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS); Dave Hunter, Founder & Owner, Crown Bees; and Lora Morandin, Associate Director, Pollinator Partnership.



Explore the diverse roles bees play in ecosystems, the challenges they face, and the delicate balance between managed and wild pollinators.



Scan to register

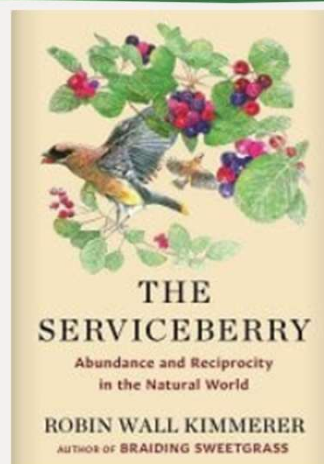
Bees Beyond Honey: Understanding Native and Managed Pollinators

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Wild Ones Journal and more



Scan to read now



Scan to view full list

Check out the journal and recommended reading list!

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Q&A/Open Discussion

We'd appreciate your feedback.
Please scan the QR code to take our survey.




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Deeply rooted in natives.....

Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay is a nonprofit supported by membership dues and donations.

Connect with us by becoming a Wild Ones member today!

Help us make a difference!

Our work depends on you!




Photo: Lynne Wheeler

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