

# Planting Native for Healthy Waters

*The 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Michigan Native Plant Conference*

*Wildflower Association of Michigan*

March 3, 2024

Kellogg Center, Michigan State University

Followed by Four Webinars throughout the Year

## **Sunday, March 3, 2024**

8:00-9:00 Registration and Refreshments - Red Cedar Room

**9:00 -9:10** Greetings & Announcements Big Ten A

**9:10 – 10:15** Big Ten A

Keynote Presentation

**DR. LYNNE HEASLEY**, Professor in the Institute of Environment and Sustainability at the School of Environment, Geography and Sustainability at Western Michigan University

*Local Ecological Knowledge as Storytelling, and Why This is Fundamental to Biodiversity Conservation in the Great Lakes*

From her hometown neighborhoods in Kalamazoo to Great Lakes islands and waterways, Lynne Heasley will explore how local ecological knowledge-building can become a powerful form of storytelling. She argues that revised storytelling is fundamental to repairing our relationships with the natural or more-than-human world; and to tackling global biodiversity, climate, and water crises.

**10:15 – 10:45** Break– Marketplace Shopping and Networking

**10:45-11:45**

Concurrent Session #1 Auditorium

**DR. JO LATIMORE**, Faculty Member, Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Michigan State University

*Life in the Weeds: Exploring the Rarely Seen World of Aquatic Plants*

Let's face it – aquatic plants get a bad rap. We refer to them as “weeds” or, even less accurately, “seaweed”. We complain about them touching us when we swim, snagging our fishing tackle, or tangling in our boat motor propellers. We see one aggressive invasive plant overtaking part of a lake and jump to the conclusion that all aquatic plants are undesirable. We should take another look! Within our lakes – mostly below the surface - exists a diverse and beautiful underwater forest. There are many shapes and sizes, from the tiny duckweed to the lush growth of large-leaf pondweed. There are plants that grow massive root systems, some that float freely in the water column, and others that rest on the surface. Some are even carnivorous! Native aquatic plants benefit our lakes by taking up nutrients, and stabilizing shorelines and bottom sediments. They provide habitat for fish, frogs, turtles, and insects. Many waterfowl rely on them for food. Healthy native plant communities can also make areas of a lake less susceptible to invasion by non-native plants. Come learn about this fascinating Michigan plant community that exists just below the surface!

Concurrent Session #2 Big Ten C

**LAWRENCE SOBSON**, Urban and Community Forester, Michigan DNR

***Trees for Your Community***

This presentation will provide information regarding proper tree species, planting, maintenance, space considerations, common concerns, and the benefits of trees to advance the conservation and maintenance of urban forests throughout Michigan.

**11:45 – 1:30** WAM Grant Awards Lunch & Break

**1:30 – 2:30**

Concurrent Session #1 Auditorium

**ERICK ELGIN**, Water Resources Educator and Aquatic Ecologist, Michigan State University Extension

***Lakeshore Conservation: Challenges of Protecting and Restoring Nearshore Vegetation***

Widespread loss of wetland and nearshore habitat along inland lakes has heightened the need for conservation activities that focus on protecting and reestablishing native vegetation in the shoreline zone of lakes. However, restoration demand using natural techniques along residential shorelines remains relatively low compared to the need. To increase conservation practices on densely populated residential shorelines, societal norms and the human dimension of restoration need to be addressed. In this presentation, I will explore restoration scenarios that balance riparian landowner wants with ecosystem needs and discuss societal norms that are barriers to the conservation of Michigan's shorelines.

Concurrent Session #2 Big Ten C

**SHELLY STUSICK**, Go Beyond Beauty Specialist, Northwest Michigan Invasive Species Network

***Getting to Know Go Beyond Beauty***

Originally created to celebrate garden retailers who have committed NOT to sell high priority invasive ornamentals in northwestern Michigan, the *Go Beyond Beauty* program has since expanded and grown over more than ten years to include garden professionals and community members statewide. Going above and beyond current Michigan regulations, this grassroots program recognizes businesses or community members who make decisions that benefit their local habitat and educates about native replacements for common invasive ornamentals and invasive plant management.

**2:30-2:45** Break – Marketplace Shopping and Networking

**2:45 – 3:45**

Concurrent Session #1 Auditorium

**PAIGE FILICE**, Natural Resources Educator, Michigan State University Extension

***Garden to Beautify Your Yard and Protect Lakes and Rivers***

Michigan is home to one of the largest sources of freshwater and with that comes great responsibility. The health of our lakes, streams, and wetlands depends on many factors including how we manage our yards. Learn how landscaping techniques such as rain gardens can be used to curb harmful runoff and protect our waterways.

## Concurrent Session #2 Big Ten C

**YU MAN LEE**, Conservation Scientist and Herpetologist, Michigan Natural Features Inventory  
***Mapping, Monitoring, and Conserving Vernal Pools, the Coral Reefs of Michigan's Forests***

Vernal pools are more than just mud puddles in the woods that dry out in the summer! These small, seasonally flooded, diverse wetlands are extremely important to the biodiversity and health of Michigan's forests, providing critical habitat for a variety of organisms, including species that rely on vernal pools for their survival. Vernal pools also contribute to nutrient cycling, water storage, and groundwater recharge. Because of their small size and temporary nature, vernal pools can be difficult to identify in the landscape and are not well-protected under current wetland regulations. Limited information on the locations and condition of vernal pools also hampers efforts to manage and protect them. Many of these wetlands have been destroyed or degraded due to a number of factors and may be further impacted by a changing climate. An overview of vernal pools and efforts to better understand and conserve them in Michigan including an update on the Michigan Vernal Pools Partnership (MVPP), a public-private partnership of over 30 organizations working to promote awareness and conservation of vernal pools, and the Vernal Pool Patrol, a statewide community science-based mapping and monitoring program, will be presented.

**3:45- 4:00 pm** Break—Marketplace Shopping and Networking

**4:00 – 4:45 pm**

Q & A Panel Discussion, #1 Auditorium

### **How to Do a Native Garden**

Learn the ins and outs of designing and maintaining your native plant garden through a question-and-answer session led by the experts in their fields.

Panelists – **Bill Schneider**, Wildtype Native Plants

**Esther Durnwald**, Michigan Wildflower Farm

**Amy Heilman**, The Living Garden

**4:50 – 5:50 pm**

***WAM Annual Meeting in the Red Cedar Room (registration/breakfast room). All are welcome to share ideas and comments about your organization. Meet your board members. Appetizers and Cash bar offered.***