Landscape Design With Wildlife In Mind

Some principals to keep in mind:

- Begin by replacing 10% of your lawn with wildlife habitat **the first year** (over time strive for 50%, or more, conversion of lawn to wildlife habitat).
- Work towards 70% native plants in your yard (including powerhouse species that support, i.e. are host plants for, the largest number of butterflies and moths) – Doug Tallamy: *Nature’s Best Hope*.
- Plant natives – look to a nearby natural area / native plant community to see what thrives in your area.
- Let nature be the guide (Larry Weaner); More life brings more life (Thomas Rainer).
- Don’t “Parkify” your property (Larry Weaner); stop obsessing about prettiness (Thomas Rainer); see plants as more than decoration (Doug Tallamy).
- Don’t let lawn be the default (Larry Weaner, Doug Tallamy).
- Remove invasives – repair your property, restore its environmental functions (L. Weaner, D. Tallamy).
- Cut back on landscaping practices that are detrimental to wildlife and nature in general (pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, fossil fuel ... mowing, cutting gardens down in fall, raking leaves).
- Minimize disturbance of existing native plants.
- Think in terms of a layered landscape of native groundcovers, perennials, shrubs, understory trees, and canopy trees (Doug Tallamy and Rick Darke: *The Living Landscape*).

Make a wish list of the wildlife habitat elements you want to add to your landscape (or circle them below). A few examples follow:

- Pollinator Garden(s) for butterflies, hummingbirds, and other beneficial pollinators (bees, etc.)
- Dragonfly / Wildlife Pond
- Meadow
- Woodland habitat: multilayered tapestry of canopy and understory trees with a ground layer of shrubs, wildflowers, grasses
- Islands of Native Shrubs
- Specific Native Shrubs
- Specific Native Trees
- Native Evergreens (for cover, food, etc.)
- Hedgerows of Native Shrubs & Wildflowers that act as: Nectar (& Berry) Hedges, Cover, & Wildlife Corridors
- Living Fence (to block neighbor’s junk or busy and noisy road)
- Brush Pile
- Mister
- Rain Garden
- Rain Barrel(s)
- Bird Baths
- Butterfly Overwintering Structure
- Garden Pathways
- Arbor (min. 7’ tall; + 18” if growing plants on it)
- Benches for viewing / enjoying your habitat
- Bird Feeding Station(s), Bird Houses, Bat Box

Make a list of the elements you need to work around (like a swing set, clothes line, etc.):

Make a list of invasive plants you may have on your property that need to be removed to move forward with your plans. A few examples follow:

- Multiflora Rose
- Autumn (& Russian) Olive
- Clematis
- Porcelainberry
- Japanese Barberry
- Norway Maple
- English Ivy
- Privet
- Oriental Bittersweet
- Winged Euonymus (Burning Bush)
- Tartarian Honeysuckle
- Periwinkle, *Vinca*
- Japanese Honeysuckle

PLEASE add additional problem plants of your own.
CREATE A SKETCH OF YOUR PROPERTY

1. Draft a sketch of your property and begin to mark it up. You can begin with the plot plan that you got when you purchased your property and blow it up at Staples to make a large sheet. Now begin to observe and plan.

2. Note on your sketch: N, S, E, W

3. Mark the sun’s path across your yard in summer and also mark the sun’s path across your yard in fall, winter, and spring (a very different path).

4. Begin to sketch in lines of movement you use to cross the property

5. Draw in all your trees

6. Note how they will shade parts of your yard in summer

7. Note how the fall, winter, and spring shade will fall.

8. Let this information assist you to choose where you’ll create shade gardens and layered landscapes in under trees [maybe draw in purple areas where this shade occurs]

9. Note the sunniest parts of your yard [maybe draw in yellow areas where sun occurs], since these will be THE best spots for pollinator gardens, a meadow, and a wildlife pond.

10. Also consider:
   a. windows or porches or sun rooms that you’ll be using to look out on your yard
   b. note low-lying areas where water collects
   c. note areas that dry out
   d. understand your soil (pH 4 = very acid which we have in South Jersey; pH 7.5 = very alkaline)
   e. understand your climate
   f. note prevailing winds and think about planting a living fence to block those winds
   g. note problems like a junk-collecting neighbor or a busy road and realize that those edges of your yard might be perfect for a living fence.

11. One BIG wildlife gardening concept to learn is that birds will plant many of the most important native plants for you if you let them. As birds feed on the berries or cones or catkins of their favored native plants, the seeds pass through their system, fall to the ground, and have the potential to begin growing if the area is not manicured, mowed, weeded, or cleared. If you want a living fence, you can speed up this process by putting up 2 posts at either end with a string or wire between them. Birds will perch on the string or wire and plant your living fence for you. If you’d like part of your yard to grow up in trees and shrubs, stop mowing and see what the birds plant for you. Then once tree and shrub seedlings begin to appear, mow around them.
SKETCH OF PAT & CLAY SUTTON’S WILDLIFE HABITAT (as an example):
Work on your plant wish lists (but be aware that, as you do research, some will not be appropriate for your site . . . remember, the right plant in the right spot).

- Select NATIVE PLANTS from resources shared during Pat Sutton’s various presentations:
  - Doug Tallamy is working with National Wildlife Federation’s Native Plant Finder: [www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder/](http://www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder/) (each plant is ranked by the # of butterfly & moth species that use it as a caterpillar plant). Enter your zip code to generate a list. This is a work in progress, so keep checking back!
  - My handout: “Gardening for Pollinators,” which shares season-by-season “Chocolate Cake” nectar plants (I’ll be happy to e-mail it to you) and lots of other helpful info.
  - My handout: “NJ’s Native Trees, Shrub, and Vines That are Beneficial to Birds” (e-mail me for a copy)
  - Doug Tallamy’s list of the top 20 Woody Plants & the top 20 Perennials that our butterflies & moths need for egg laying (I’ll be happy to e-mail it to you, since it is no longer available on Tallamy’s website).
  - 2 catalogues: Prairie Moon Nursery and Prairie Nursery— and go to their websites for photos, plant cultural information (sun/shade needs, moisture/dry needs, height, color, bloom time, etc.). These catalogues and their websites are like priceless books to native plants.
  - Avoid Cultivars!
  - Take advantage of upcoming native plant sales and support native plant nurseries – I keep a list updated on my website at: [http://www.patsuttonwildlifegarden.com/some-sources-native-plants/](http://www.patsuttonwildlifegarden.com/some-sources-native-plants/). All the WORK has been done for you – these sales include plants that will flourish where you live.
  - USDA Plants Database website to determine if a plant is native and occurs in your area
  - Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower website
  - DO NOT USE plants treated with Neonicotinoids (links to help you understand why you want to avoid neonics are on my website at:  [http://www.patsuttonwildlifegarden.com/some-sources-native-plants/](http://www.patsuttonwildlifegarden.com/some-sources-native-plants/)

- If plants you are interested in are NOT on these lists or featured in these Plant Sales, do your research. You may learn that they are not native, not beneficial to wildlife, and may even be invasive species.

Native Trees you’d like to add to your habitat:

Native Shrubs & Vines you’d like to add to your habitat:

Native Grasses & Ferns you’d like to add to your habitat:

Native Perennials you’d like to add to your habitat:

Nectar plants (be sure to include some annuals that are not problematic/invasive) you’d like to add:

Caterpillar plants you’d like to add to your habitat (some of these are plants you may have previously pulled up as weeds). Realize too that many of the native trees, shrubs, vines, grasses, & perennials are not only providing berries and/or nectar, but also serving as important caterpillar plants.
Larry Weaner Landscape Associates, Inc. Leader in Natural Landscaping. [http://lweanerassociates.com/](http://lweanerassociates.com/) In 1990, Larry Weaner developed the “New Directions in the American Landscape Conference” series, which has developed a dedicated following within the professional landscape community. **For great insight into landscape design read:**

- Additional helpful pieces by Weaner:


- **Bringing Nature Home, How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens**, by Douglas Tallamy. Timber Press, 2007. Powerful & compelling read about how we impact the diversity of insects, birds, and all wildlife when we plant and nurture natives as opposed to non-natives. Pages 294-300 include a list of “Native Plants With Wildlife Value and Desirable Landscaping Attributes for the Mid-Atlantic and Middle States.” This book is a MUST READ and the native plant list should always be with you as you make plant purchases.

- **The Living Landscape**, by Rick Darke & Doug Tallamy. Timber Press, 2014. This book is the next chapter to your education, introducing you to how important it is to consider all the “layers” that make up a healthy, functioning ecosystem (ground covers, perennials, shrubs, understory trees, and canopy trees). Pages 289-366 include charts of selected plants and their landscape functions (spring flowers, fragrance, screening, etc) and ecological functions (cover for wildlife, nest sites for birds, pollen producer, etc.) region-by-region. Another MUST READ and the native plant list for your region should always be with you as you make plant purchases.

- **Doug Tallamy presentations** – if you ever have a chance to hear Doug Tallamy speak, BE THERE. In the meantime Google “YouTube videos Doug Tallamy” and “Podcast Doug Tallamy” and you’ll have dozens to choose from, many of which are keynote talks he’s given about the importance of insects, native plants, and much more. Watch them and they may change your life and/or the way you view life.


- Thomas Rainer’s website Grounded Design (exploring the intersection of ecology, horticulture, and design): https://www.thomasrainer.com/ Thomas Rainer is a landscape architect by profession and a gardener by obsession. Watch and listen to his interview, “Gardening in a Post Wild World” (featured March 15, 2017 under the header “latest post” at https://www.thomasrainer.com/blog).


- **Principles of Ecological Landscape Design**, by Travis Beck. Island Press, 2013. Thomas Rainer of Grounded Design shares that this may be the most important landscape book since Ian McHarg’s groundbreaking work, *Design with Nature* (which pioneered the concept of ecological planning).


Landscape Design With Wildlife In Mind (page 6)


★ My own website showcases teachings about (& practicing) wildlife habitat gardening: www.patsuttonwildlifegarden.com

★ Designing Gardens with Flora of the American East, by Carolyn Summers. Rutgers University Press, 2010. This excellent guidebook for garden professionals (and the general public) is an in-depth look at our love affair with nonnative plants; showcases eastern native plants that can correct this situation.

★ Landscaping With Native Plants in the Middle-Atlantic Region, by Elizabeth du Pont, 2nd Edition (2004). Brandywine Conservancy, PO Box 141, Chadds Ford, PA 19317; Phone: 610-388-2700.


★ Invasive Plants: A Guide to Identification, Impacts, and Control of Common North American Species, 2nd Edition, by Sylvan Ramsey Kaufman and Wallace Kaufman, 2012. The landscape designer needs to be part artist and part REPAIRMAN, restoring some of the environmental functions of the landscape that have been destroyed by the spread of invasive species. This book is an excellent guide to invasive plant ID and how to control them.

Beyond the great resources above, be inspired by design ideas in healthy wildlife habitats and natural landscapes:

★ http://lweanerassociates.com/ – Natural Landscapes by Landscape Architect Larry Weaner

★ Visit other butterfly & hummingbird gardens for design and plant ideas. For 23 years I led tours of Private Wildlife Gardens in Cape May County. You can take a virtual tour of many of the gardens that were included on these tours on my website: North Tour: www.patsuttonwildlifegarden.com/north-tour-photo-gallery
South Tour: www.patsuttonwildlifegarden.com/south-tour-photo-gallery
Mid-County Tour: www.patsuttonwildlifegarden.com/mid-county-tour-photo-gallery

★ Hometown Habitat, Stories of Bringing Nature Home, a 90-minute documentary, by author/director Catherine Zimmerman in collaboration with Dr. Douglas Tallamy (May 2016). The film explores how and why native plants are critical to the survival and vitality of local eco-systems. Includes inspiring stories of habitat heroes across the country, who have worked to bring back nature to their hometowns. https://themeadowproject.com/hometown-habitat/

★ Urban and Suburban Meadows, Bringing Meadowscaping to Big and Small Spaces, by Catherine Zimmerman: (1) BOOK: Matrix Media Press, 2010 and (2) DVD: The Meadow Project (www.themeadowproject.com), 2012. The DVD is full of inspirational visuals / design ideas!

★ VISIT natural areas where native plants are protected and invasives are removed like:

★ Bowman’s Hill Wildflower Preserve, a 134-acre nature preserve and botanical garden in New Hope, PA, featuring hundreds of species of native plants in woodlands, meadows, and ponds. 1635 River Road, New Hope, PA 18938; 215-862-2924; http://www.bhwp.org/. Check the “What’s in Bloom” link on their website to learn of all the native trees, shrubs, vines, and wildflowers flourishing there: http://bhwp.org/visit/whats-in-season/ . Their native plant nursery reopens April 18, 2020. Non-members are charged an admission fee.

★ Mt. Cuba Center, a 7-acre botanical garden in Hockessin, DE, near Wilmington, in the gently rolling hills of the Delaware Piedmont. 3120 Barley Mill Rd, Hockessin, DE 19707; 302-239-4244; http://mtcubacenter.org/ Gardens reopen for visitation on April 1, 2020; classes year-round. Take a “Virtual Tour” of the gardens’ 3 different growing seasons: https://mtcubacenter.org/visit/tour/spring/ Learn of tours and tickets at their website.