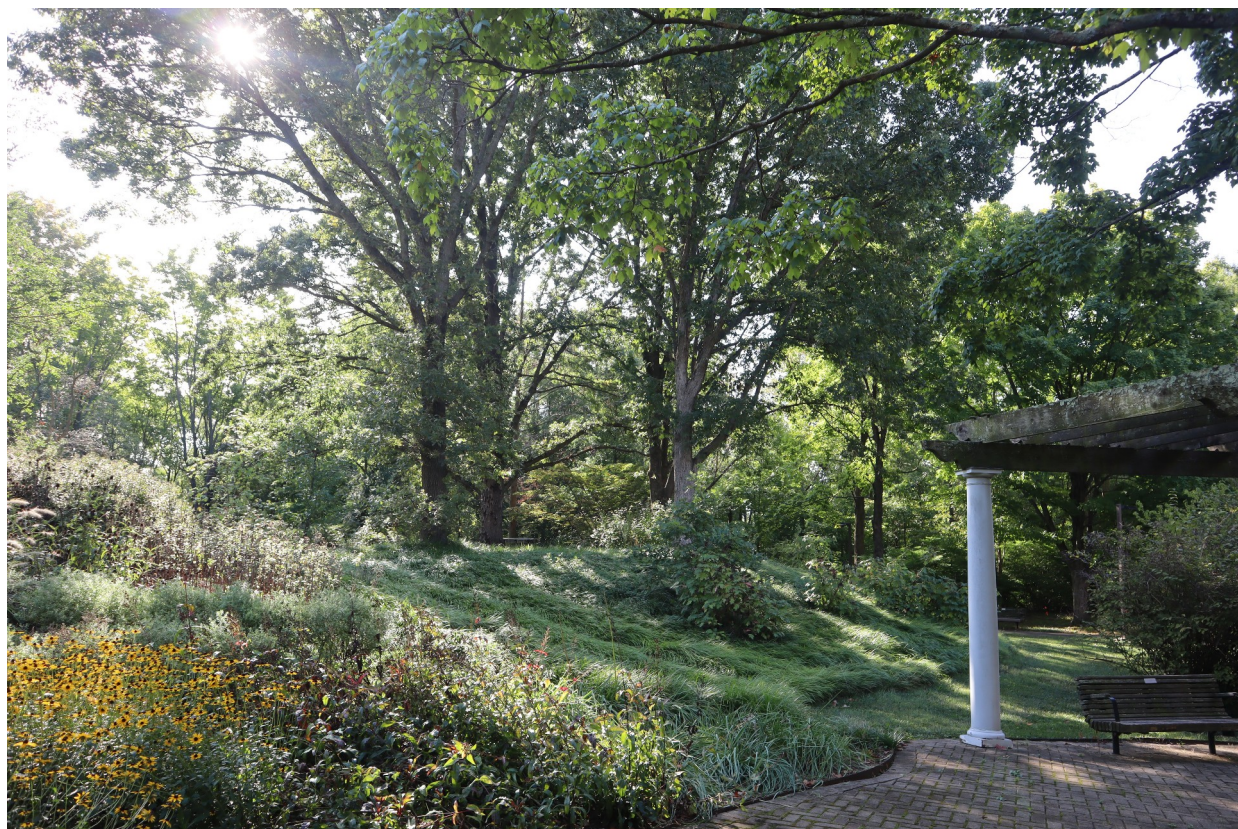

The
BLACK-EYED SUSAN
Quarterly Newsletter of The Friends of Helen Avalynne Tawes Garden, Inc.

Volume 26 number 3
July - Sept 2024



The Wood for the Trees

Here at the Friends of Tawes we always enjoy reminding people that approximately 50 years ago, today's mostly wooded Garden was a flat, bare parking lot with no trees whatsoever. A great deal of dedicated effort went into the design, hardscaping, and planting of the Tawes Garden, and continuing care over the years has made it into a landscape where it's literally "hard to see the wood for the trees". A mind-boggling change from the parking lot it used to be.

Trees are the outstanding feature of the Garden today. While still young as forests go, many of its trees have reached an impressive size and girth that would have been hard to envision when work began on that bare lot. With luck, some will continue to grow on into the next century at least, and some have the capacity to survive much longer. We think it's a rather inspiring notion, and one worth supporting, as the Friends have done for years.

And in fact the Tawes Garden is a certified Arboretum as well as a (very small) state park. It has a wide variety of catalogued trees, more than would likely exist on a purely natural site, and records are kept of their species, planting dates, locations, and status over time. Many are Eastern US natives; some come from farther afield. They are evergreen and deciduous, noted for their flowers, fruits, or foliage--and for their benefits to wildlife. This last is important because it makes the Garden an inviting oasis for many species of birds and for numerous small terrestrial and aquatic dwellers who make their home there. And what enhances the Garden for wildlife also enhances it as a Garden experience for human visitors.

Of course, the Garden's tree population changes over time, which is why records are needed. Not all trees survive their initial planting, and others succumb now and then to drought, storms or disease. It's all part of the concept, however, and new, perhaps better adapted trees are planted periodically--as staffing and funds allow. Even the self-sown seedlings of now-mature trees are sometimes allowed to settle in, letting Nature improve on what humans began.

The role of the Friends of Tawes Garden is to assist financially and on occasion physically with this ongoing process, and we are happy to have a part in it. We'd also welcome anyone interested in the Garden's present and future to join us--we can be contacted at our web address: tawesgarden.org

Fountain Fizzle or, Flowing Pains

Our dedicated readers may recall that in the last issue of the ***Black-Eyed Susan*** (April - June 2024) we announced that our 15-year-old pond aerator fountain had expired and the Friends had purchased a new unit which we hoped to have installed by the end of April.

In fact the new, larger fountain was up and running by April 25 and looked beautiful viewed from the Patio:



Sadly, our sense of accomplishment was short lived: The new fountain abruptly stopped running in early June. Once Horticulturalist Suzanne Weber determined that the problem was beyond her

experienced trouble-shooting skills to fix, the technician was called, the unit removed, and as of the start of July we are still awaiting its repair/replacement.

Meanwhile the best has been made of its absence. The undisturbed pond surface has provided an excellent opportunity for the MD Conservation Corps. volunteers to don waders and continue their heroic efforts to clear large quantities of accumulated muck from its bottom. Kudos to them!



We are now eagerly looking forward to the reinstallation of the fountain in its freshly cleaned pond. Second time's the charm? We certainly hope so--but stay tuned for the next issue!



Natives vs. Cultivars

Many gardeners who are keen to welcome native pollinators into their home gardens or community landscapes focus on choosing plants that are native to Maryland. Not only are these the most friendly host plants to a range of important pollinators, but native plants usually demand less watering, suffer less pest damage and are more suited to Maryland's hot and steamy summers. But in searching for the best native plants, we are often faced with a wide range of "cultivars" or "nativars", another term for native cultivars. Cultivars and nativars are often quite stunning and promise season-long bloom and beauty.

A quick review of terms:

Native – these are species that are or were naturally found in a given area. For example, in the United States, native species are recognized as those that were here before European settlement.

Cultivar – these are varieties of native species that have been specifically chosen, crossbred or hybridized to display specific desirable characteristics. Often the specific cultivar name is shown between apostrophes, such as garden phlox 'Jeana' (a very popular and successful phlox cultivar that is present in the Tawes Garden Plant Mural).

Nativar – another term for a cultivar of a native species.

Straight Species -- a native species that is in its natural and original form.

Cultivars are bred for a variety of reasons. They often offer more spectacular, larger, more colorful or longer-lasting blooms. Another reason may be the improved resistance to pests or diseases. Or some cultivars may be bred to be more tolerant of drought or exceptionally humid conditions.

But are cultivars as attractive to native pollinators or as ecologically beneficial as straight native species? Research on this question is still relatively new but has yielded occasionally mixed results. Recent studies have compared the wildlife value of natives vs. cultivars using different measures. Some studies have tallied the number of animal visits while others have examined total nectar and pollen content, a somewhat trickier methodology.

Some of the more interesting and curious results of recent studies:

- A 2015 Penn State trial found that, generally, straight species were about 50% better than cultivars in terms of the number of pollinator visits. For example, the straight species wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) was visited by almost four times more pollinators than the cultivar wild bergamot 'Claire Grace'. Similarly, the straight species New England aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*) had three times more pollinator visits than the cultivar New England aster 'Purple Dome'. But this did not hold true for all species, as seen by the cultivar threadleaf tickseed (*Coreopsis verticillata*) 'Moonbeam', which had twice as many visits as the straight species.
- The Mt. Cuba Center, a public garden and native plant research facility in Delaware, has long carried on a series of test trials of various cultivars. In their research, the *Monarda* cultivar 'Claire Grace' was in fact favored by butterflies and moths, unlike the results found in the Penn State trial. In addition, Mt. Cuba's tests of various garden phlox (*Phlox paniculata*) varieties showed that the cultivar 'Jeana' positively outperformed the straight phlox species. Another favorite cultivar to emerge from the Mt. Cuba trials was the wild bergamot or bee balm 'Jacob Cline' (another Tawes Garden Plant Mural favorite). This cultivar received over 200 more hummingbird visits than the straight *monarda* species.
- Some studies are less definitive. White (2016) found that hummingbirds visited the hybrid cardinal flower *Lobelia x. speciosa* more often than the straight species (*Lobelia cardinalis*). However, when they examined the nectar content, they found that the hybrid only provided 20% of the energy that the hummingbird would get from the straight species. So more energy was required for less food.

These are just a few samples of recent studies which show how varied results are. Much may depend on the methodology used in each study.

Looking ahead, one additional unanswered question is what effect possible cross-pollination of cultivars and straight species may have on the native population of plants. Further study is required on this front.

The
BLACK-EYED SUSAN

Natives vs. cultivars? It is important to understand the pros and cons of each. In any case, whether you choose a native straight species or a cultivar/nativar, rest assured that both are better choices than an invasive species.

Cindy Wells



Tawes Butterfly and Bumblebee Habitat Stewards July Presentation

This program is a new environmental education and volunteer training program for Chesapeake Bay pollinator habitat gardeners, stewards and naturalists. The program is free and open to the public. The first three presentations in the series of lectures this year have been “Pollinator Plants in the Tawes Garden”, “USGS Bee Projects in Maryland” and “Maryland Native Pollinators”, each presented by an expert in the field. July’s lecture promises to be equally interesting and informative. Please consider attending!

July 18th, 2024 – 9:30am – 12noon

“Beneficial Predators and Parasitoids”

Maxine Yoon, University of Maryland Master Gardener Coordinator for Anne Arundel County

Where: Maryland Department of Natural Resources Headquarters and Tawes Garden

Main Conference Room (CRC1)

580 Taylor Avenue, Annapolis 21401

Free parking is available in front of the DNR Building or through Gate 6 of the Naval Academy Stadium parking lot

The lecture is free but we do ask attendees to register by phone or email to:

Suzanne Weber, Tawes Garden Horticulturist

Suzanne.weber@maryland.gov

410-260-8185 (please leave a message)

For more information about the whole series, please refer to the [events](#) page on our [website](#).

Tawes Master Gardener Native Plants Festival

September 14, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

More information forthcoming on our website!

Tawes Garden Gift Shop

The shop is located in the lobby of the Department of Natural Resources headquarters building at
580 Taylor Ave., Annapolis, MD 21401

Current Tawes Gift Shop hours are Wednesdays and Thursdays from 10 am until 2 pm.



New summer inventory is in! Come check it out

Board Members:

(of Friends of Helen Avalynne Tawes Garden, Inc)

Mary Stuart Sierra, *President*
Diane Fehely, *Vice President*
Alison Burbage, *(Secretary)*
Donald Myers, *Treasurer*
Suzann Barthold
Robert B. Bender *(Consulting)*
David Davis *(Consulting)*
Sarah Hilderbrand
Barbara Small *(FGCMD Dist. II Rep.)*
Bonnie Pavlak
Lisa Siciliano
Cindy Wells *(AA Co. MG Rep.)*

HOURS:

Garden: *Daylight Hours, Daily*

Gift Shop: *Tues ~ Thurs.*

10 am to 2pm

Admission: *Free*

Tours: Tours are not presently offered, but the CR-coded **Tawes Garden Tour** can be accessed through visitors' phones.

CR code stations are placed at various points around the Garden.

General Information Toll Free:

1-800-830-3974

GARDEN STAFF:

Curtis Dale, Ranger
William Steckman
Suzanne Weber, Horticulturist

Dates to Note

Full Moons: July 21,
August 19, September 17

August 11/12, Perseid Meteor Shower

September 22 :
Autumn Equinox, first day of Fall

September 28:
National Public Lands Day

Recent Contributions to the Tawes Garden

(March 11 2024 thru June 10 2024)

Jay & Cindy Myers
(in memory of Ranger Nancy Gardner)

Naval Academy Garden Club

St. Mary's County Garden Club

Those wishing to make a tax deductible donation should make the check payable to:

Friends of Helen Avalynne Tawes Garden, Inc.

P.O. Box 5502 **(New Number!)**

Annapolis, Maryland 21403

To Find Us

The Tawes Garden is located between Rowe Blvd. and Taylor Ave. near downtown Annapolis. The Garden can be entered either through the Tawes Building Lobby or by following the signs from the sidewalk along Sachs Dr.

Visitor Parking

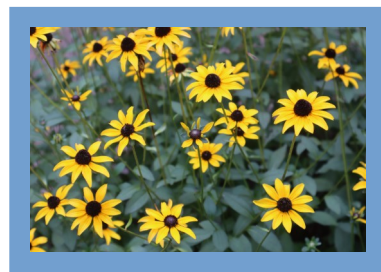
Visitor parking is available through Gate 6 of the Navy/Marine Stadium on Taylor Ave. (FREE). Parking closer to the Garden is limited during work hours, but there are several spaces designated as visitor parking on Sachs Blvd. across from the Tawes Building entrance. Spaces are generally available after work hours and on weekends.

Public Transportation

Annapolis Transit's Gold Route on Rowe Blvd (\$2.00) or State Shuttle. For more information, call 410-263-7964 or visit the [State Shuttle](#)

Seeing spots before your eyes?

Sometimes it's a good thing!



Summer Blooms

(July – September)

Blazing Star, Rudbeckias, Phlox, Beebalm, Coneflower, Goldenrod, Water Canna, Asters, etc.

