



CT OUTDOORS ~ Go Native with Joe Pye and Friends

Published July 20, 2010
The Waterford Times, Waterford, CT
Suzanne Thompson

Who says gardeners, especially environmentally conscious ones, are a dull lot? Perennial Harmony Garden Shop in Waterford has the right idea for combining horticulture and pollution reducing landscaping information and ideas with food, fun, and music.

It's all coming together at Joe Pye Day on Sunday, July 25, when the garden center puts on a native plant sale fundraiser to benefit Save the River-Save the Hills, the grassroots environmental outreach and education group that works to protect and preserve the Oswegatchie Hills and Niantic River and to reduce pollution into the waters.

The event, which runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., offers workshops and presentations by area experts: Dr. Juliana Barrett, Ph.D., CT Sea Grant College Program at UConn Avery Point, on riparian corridor plantings for homeowners; Judy Rondeau, Eastern Connecticut Conservation District, on the Niantic River Watershed Plan that is supported by East Lyme, Montville, Salem, and Waterford; Judy Preston, Long Island Sound Outreach, on riparian buffers; local author Susan Munger who wrote "Common to this Country," a book about the botanical specimen collecting of Lewis and Clark on their 1804-1806 expedition; and Linda Turner of Plantasia and Brad Durfee, head arborist at Sprigs & Twigs Landscapes, LLC in Gales Ferry.

There also will be music by singer-songwriter Arlene Wow and a variety of exhibits and vendors, including Hunts Brook Farm, Waterford Farmers Market, NOFA (Northeast Organic Farmers Association), the Mitchell College Beach

Invite Joe and friends into your own yard!

Native plants are already adapted to our climate so don't need synthetic fertilizers or pesticides, unlike introduced plants.

Planting multiple native species provides nectar for butterflies and vegetation for a variety of caterpillars and other insects; birds need a diet of insects to bear their young, as well as berries and seeds from native plants for year-round feeding.

Petie Reed selected these native plants for Joe Pye Day - try them in your yard, too:

- *Asclepias incarnata*
Swamp Milkweed
- *Asclepias tuberosa*
Butterfly Weed
- *Aster novae-angliae*
New England Aster
- *Eupatorium maculatum*
Joe Pye Weed and Boneset
- *Hibiscus moscheutos*
Swamp Rose Mallow
- *Iris versicolor*
Blue Flag Iris
- *Lupinus perennis*
Wild Blue Lupine
- *Verbena hastata*
Blue Vervain
- *Vernonia noveboracensis*
New York Ironweed

Restoration project, Wise Waste, West Farms Land Trust, Woodward Greenhouses, Duchess Pet Treats, F.R.E.S.H, and Bucky's Garden.

Reed, a board member of STR-STH, decided to hold a native plant sale as a fundraiser for the group and to help area residents learn more about how they could make their landscapes more environmentally friendly. She heard about the UConn Department of Extension and Sea Grant's program to help homeowners reduce silt, nitrogen fertilizer, and pesticides runoff into the sound by changing their landscaping and lawn care practices and decided to team up for the day.

"We had to come up with a more exciting name than 'Riparian Buffer Day,'" said Reed, who admitted that she's never used the word "riparian" to describe a river bank area in her seven years of running a chemical-free garden center. "So we named it after Joe Pye, a Native-American medicine man who traveled New England extensively. Legend has it that he cured many people of typhus and other illnesses with this plant that grows wild on river banks."

The plant, *Eupatorium maculatum*, is a native North-American perennial herb found in moist woods and meadows from southern Canada to Florida and west to Texas. It can get up to 12 feet tall, a cluster of large woody stems, each topped with a dome of small pinkish to white flowers that bloom in August to September. The stems die off each year and a new crop of sprouts comes out each spring to put on another show.

It has multiple common names, from Queen of the Meadow, gravel root, kidney root, and purple boneset to Joe Pye. Connecticut has four species of the plant, according to Connecticut Botanical Society.

"The flowers are magnets for birds, butterflies, and the leaves feed their caterpillars," Reid said. Sometimes deer will chomp off the top spring shoots, but these will grow back and put out new flowers.

Perennial Harmony will sell a variety of native plants recommended for more use in landscaping because of their visual interest, either the blooms and foliage, or bark, shape and form, and are easy to care for. People can buy and take away the plants on Sunday or order them for fall planting.

"You can plant these at any time, but if you're not going to water your plants very faithfully, every other day or so, in this weather, you should wait to plant them in the fall," Reed said. "You definitely need to do more watering this time of year."

Reed is donating all proceeds from the sale of 10 specific native plant species, including the cost of the plant, on Sunday to STR-STH and is donating a portion of the proceeds from the sale of any other native plants it already has in stock.

Perennial Harmony Garden Shop is at 368 Boston Post Rd, Waterford. For more information, call 860-440-3653 or visit www.perennialharmony.com.