

Nature Niche

Nature By The Yard — Fostering a Natural Sense of Wonder

Autumn, 2010

Volume 7, Issue 3
Calendar of Events
Please call the hosting organization for reservation information.

Insect Fest. Sept. 11. 10-4pm. Families. Mercer County Master Gardeners. Free. Federal City Rd. Pennington, NJ

Toddler Walk. Sept. 13 10-11am Kids ages 18-36 months with adult. Buttinger Nature Center. Pennington, NJ (609) 737-7592. Fee.

Native Plant Sale Sept. 18. All ages. 10-4pm. Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve. 215.862.2924

Kidstock 2010 Sat. Oct. 2 All ages 10-4pm. Waterfront Park, Trenton, NJ <kidstock2010.com>

Toddler Walk Oct. 27 10-11am Kids ages 18-36 months with

Praying Mantids

Growing up, everyone knew it was illegal to kill a Praying mantis. It was common knowledge. I haven't been able to find out where this began, whether it was started by some well meaning parent trying to teach their kids not to kill insects or if a well intentioned farmer realized how many insects mantids eat and thought to kill one would be a crime. Maybe it was because they looked like they are praying and there is a religious slant to the

myth. What ever the reason, I'm here to tell you they are not endangered, it is not illegal to kill one (though it would be a shame) and, most of the ones we find today in the mid-Atlantic, aren't even native. There are more than 2000 species of mantids worldwide —three of which are found in our area, the European, the Chinese and the Carolina mantid. Can you guess which one is

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Landscaping with Native Plants

Its been a tough summer for the plants. As I stare out my window for inspiration to finish this newsletter, I'm looking at some of my landscaping as it droops and turns brown.

We haven't had a substantial rain in several weeks and the ground is cracked in some places. You can see some trees have gone straight from green to brown without showing off the brilliant fall colors. But some of my plants are doing fine.

The plants I have in my yard that are native to Pennsylvania, and planted in the correct

habitat for their requirements, are thriving despite the lack of rain. I have several winterberry holly, inkberry and fothergilla that are happily waiting out the drought. My joe-pye weed, butterfly weed, coral bells, and goldenrod are either setting seeds or just coming into bloom. The goldfinches are feasting on the coneflower seeds, hopefully leaving a few for next year. What is suffering is the Rose of Sharon, the evergreen azaleas and the magnolia. They are brown, wilted and in some cases, dying.

I've always been drawn to using

(Continued on back page)

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adult. Buttinger Nature
Center. Pennington, NJ
(609) 737-7592. Fee

Toddler Walk Nov. 16
10-11am Kids ages 18-36
months with adult.
Buttinger Nature
Center. Pennington, NJ
(609) 737-7592. Fee

Animal Coverings Nov.
18. 7-8pm. Families.
Willow Grove Public
Library. 215.659.0741.
Free.

Toddler Walk Mon. Dec.
13 10-11am Kids ages 18-
36 months with adult.
Buttinger Nature
Center. Pennington, NJ
(609) 737-7592. Fee

Coming Soon!!!

Check the Nature By
The Yard web site for
an exciting new addition:
Nature On Demand.
Here, you'll find short
5-10 minute clips of me
showing how you can
share nature with your
child right at home.
These short programs
are full of fun, easy
ideas you and your child
can do outside and
inside.

Explore, share, and

We're on the Web

<http://naturebytheyard.com>

Mantids (continued)

native to the United States?

The European mantid is green
or brown and carries a black
spot with a white center under
their front arms. The Chinese
mantid is also large and green or
brown without the spot. These
are the mantids typically
released for the biological
control of insects. Though their
effectiveness is debated.

The Carolina mantid is smaller
and slender and often has a
small black spot on the leading
edge of the wing.

In all cases, the females are
larger than the males. After
mating, the females will lay a
large, brown, spongy egg mass
that hardens. It contains up to
200 eggs that hatch inside.

Tiny versions of the adults
emerge in spring. Cannibalism
among the young is common.

It is true that the female
sometimes bites the head off
her mate, but not always. Gives
a whole new meaning to biting
your husbands' head off
doesn't it?

Native plants (continued)

native plants in the home
landscape, not just because
they attract native insects
which in turn attract native
birds, but because native plants
are adapted to our climate and
I hate to water the garden. It
is true that a six week drought
is unusual, but not unheard of.
These plants have been thriving
here well before I arrived and
will continue well after I'm
gone.

If you're interested in
beginning to use native plants in

your home landscape, a great
place to start is Bowman's Hill
Wildflower Preserve. They are
dedicated to the preservation
and conservation of native
plants. Their fall native plant
sale is underway now. Or visit
your local nursery and demand
they carry more native plants.
Just make sure they are
nursery grown, not just nursery
stock.

For a link to Bowman's Hill, visit
<http://naturebytheyard.com>.

About Our Organization...

Nature By The Yard was
started in January, 2001. We
offer fun, hands-on nature
education programs for schools,
scouts, camps, libraries,
birthday parties, garden clubs,
nature centers, wildflower
preserves and other organized
groups. We also provide

workshops for teachers on using
the schoolyard as a classroom
tool as well as offer advice and
expertise on designing school
yard habitats. For details on
our services, visit
<http://naturebytheyard.com> or
call Pam at (609) 610-6292.