

Thursday, Concurrent Sessions 1 (2:45 pm-3:45 pm)

1. Natives - The Lesser Knowns: Carve Out Space in Your Plantings for Them

Host: John Manion

Those of us who are aficionados of native plants are usually keenly aware of the most frequently planted species...the Cardinal Flowers, Wild Indigos, Purple Coneflowers, etc. But let's take a look at some of the lesser known, yet wonderful species.

2. Native Vegetation Establishment for Stream and Wetland Restoration Projects: Trials and Tribulations

Host: Dillon Connor

Native vegetation reestablishment on restoration projects can be difficult, particularly in riparian and wetland environments where frequent disturbance is inherent to the natural hydrological regime. Restoration experts are faced with an ever-increasing number of natural and anthropogenic challenges when developing and implementing restoration planting schemes. In this presentation Mr. Connor will highlight some of these challenges and share some planning level considerations, design suggestions, and practical techniques that can improve native vegetation establishment in restored landscapes.

3. Discovery and Rewilding of the Cajun Prairie

Host: Dr. Malcom Vidrine

The Great Southwestern (Coastal) Prairie in Louisiana (now referred to as 'Cajun Prairie'), was considered extirpated in 1986. However, remnants were recognized along railroad rights-of-way, and plant, butterfly, and dragonfly inventories were initiated, and blooming phenology and flight seasons, respectively, were studied. Restoration efforts began in 1988 and continue today; however, restoration now is developed under the topics of 'rewilding'--processes that incorporate local ecosystems, biodiversity, and hydrology. Concepts of synecology, where parasitic and mutualistic relationships, recognize the complex nature of community structure and succession within the context of the global biodiversity crisis. Local efforts are compiled in an effort to achieve goals of tens of thousands of acres on a realistic timeline--as we are at the edge of a global cliff linking biodiversity decline with human population and economic decline, as predicted by the CR's 'Limits to Growth' (1972).

4. Developing a Georgia Native Seed Network for the Production of Conservation Species

Host: Zach Wood

In Georgia and the Southeast, there is a pressing need for native plant seeds that are well-suited to local conditions. Unfortunately, the current supply is not meeting this demand, which is vital for wildfire recovery and habitat restoration. To address this, we have launched the Georgia Native Seed Network. This initiative connects experts and producers with those in need of

native plant materials, ensuring these resources are more accessible. We are actively and ethically collecting seeds from wild populations, following the Seeds of Success protocol, focusing on common workhorse species. This effort supports future production and benefits both the local ecosystem and the economy.

5. Mindful Management of Invasive Plants

Host: Raven Sterling

Invasive plants destroy crucial habitats for wildlife, trees, and native plants, while simultaneously threatening and dramatically reducing biodiversity. Demonstrating a holistic approach, Raven shares successes in mechanical removal and management of common invasive plants. In addition to dramatically reducing the amount and severity of invasive plant infestations that threaten the health and viability of our land, forests, and waterways, the long-term costs and consequences of the work are undeniably less severe. They serve, rather than harm, the overarching system that sustains life. Holistic practices improve soil and water quality, protect and restore rapidly diminishing habitats for a host of wildlife, increase the biodiversity of plant and animal life, and create opportunities for native plant species to rebound and thrive. Raven demonstrates that mindful management is highly effective and improves the health and viability of the land and all life that depends on it.

Thursday, Concurrent Sessions 2 (4:00 pm-5:00 pm)

1. Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge into Conservation and Restoration: An Overview of the Southeastern Grassland Institute's Tribal Program

Host: Corlee Thomas-Hill

2. Bat Conservation

Host: Cecile Parrish

3. Reclaiming Heritage: Belonging & Biodiversity in an Antebellum Landscape

Host: Mitchell Robinson

4. Partnering With Land Trusts To Leverage Plant Conservation Outcomes

Host: Lauren Ulich

In the face of increasing development and loss of natural areas, native plant advocates are compelled to consider the question of how and where to protect plants. Meaningful plant conservation is rarely possible without collaborative partnerships as we navigate a complicated landscape of increasingly fragmented and privately-owned lands, secure funding for this critical work, and encounter the difficulty of long-term project stewardship. Have you considered partnering with your local land trust? The ever-growing network of permanently protected lands offers unique locations and opportunities to conserve and restore plant communities. Let's explore the alignment of land trust work and plant conservation and how to leverage these partnerships for a more holistic approach to address losses of plant biodiversity. Join me as I discuss my experiences from establishing a land trust restoration program, give examples of exciting collaborative projects and share useful funding opportunities.

5. **Green Infrastructure Maintenance: Managing Stormwater, Habitat, and Public Perception**

Host: Lyn Rutherford

Let's talk about maintenance! Or should we call it management? Chattanooga's Natural Resources Team takes care of municipal gardens, trees, grasslands, and SCMs (stormwater control measures) like rain gardens, green roofs, and riparian buffers. These stormwater management landscapes can be expensive and ecologically sensitive; They require specialized care to function properly. They are expected to deliver complex water quality protection and flood reduction services for human health and safety. Which is on top of the usual fantastic environmental benefits we associate with native plantings. And yet... most people's only impression of these remarkable landscapes is just whether or not they "look pretty". So what's a green infrastructure maintenance worker's role in native plant outreach? Or in the design process? Wouldn't stormwater management strategies benefit the broader land care industry? Will 5 hedge trimmers be enough, or can we set this on fire? Follow me through a year's cycle of listening to the land, adapting, redesigning, teaching, and working outside. I would love to share some of our successes and lessons learned through managing these special landscapes.