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Go Green Galloway, Stockton Present Series of Sustainable Landscaping Workshops

They also have more scheduled for the coming weeks.

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Area residents were recently treated to a series of three sustainable landscaping workshops. Based on the number of attendees at each workshop, there is tremendous interest in learning how to transition yards into chemical-free, wildlife-friendly habitat.

The first of the series, sponsored by the [Richard Stockton College of New Jersey](#), featured Douglas Tallamy, noted author of "Bringing Nature Home-How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants." More than 200 people came to the new Stockton Campus Center Theater to hear Tallamy discuss changing our thinking about what makes a "beautiful yard" and the importance of replacing lawns and non-native species with a beneficial habitat that is rapidly disappearing.

The inter-connective food web must be maintained with diverse native plants that provide places for wildlife to nest, be sheltered and have sufficient food and water for their lifespan and migration habits, he said. His presentation included a listing of how many insects use certain plants as host plants; explaining the significance of planting these species for the continuance of those that feed on those insects. For more information, visit bringingnaturehome.net and plantnative.com.

The second presenter was Brian Marsh, who is a wildlife biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. Brian concentrated on invasive species plants and native alternatives. Many of the 66 attendees were surprised to hear that so many of their beloved plants and trees in their yards were providing absolutely no support to native wildlife and were more than likely contributing to native plants being "choked out" by the invasive nature of these species.

Ornamental plants, mostly from Asia, were brought to the US as beautiful status symbols to create the lush properties that, unfortunately, have become

the norm. These plants have no predators or diseases to attack them and therefore have a great advantage over native species.

Marsh gave many alternatives that are as attractive as the invasive species and will benefit our indigenous wildlife. A couple of examples: Callery (Bradford) Pear can be replaced with Serviceberry, several hawthorns, or native sweet crabapple and Japanese Honeysuckle can be replaced with native

trumpet honeysuckle, which offers nectar-rich red or yellow tubular flowers that hummingbirds love.

To learn more, download Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas through the [National Park Service](#).

Jesse Connor, a Certified Master Gardener, and former naturalist, horticultural associate, and specialty garden designer, presented the final workshop. Connor spoke of transitioning yards in order to create a habitat specifically for birds and other wildlife. She gave many reasons that the traditional large expanse of lawn and non-native foundation plantings should be reconsidered.

In order for a lawn to remain "pristine", it needs massive amounts of water, herbicides, pesticides and mowing; all practices that are harmful to the environment and therefore to indigenous wildlife, she said.

Connor gave many examples of ways to, little by little, remove lawn and plant beneficial native plants with a series of steps that included identifying and removing invasive plants, identifying and removing non-native plants and then replacing them with native alternatives.

A yard that is wildlife friendly needs to have several layers: shrubs, understory trees and, eventually, a tree canopy.

Connor discussed choosing plant materials that support biodiversity and offer wildlife opportunities to nest, provide cover, shelter and raise their young.

The second two programs were co-sponsored by Go Green Galloway and the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the South Jersey Shore. They were held at the Unitarian Universalist Center in Pomona.

Further programs that feature sustainable landscaping are scheduled to include: Backyard Habitat tour, a Sustainable Landscape Certification Program, incentive programs to provide native plants to those that are transitioning their yards and we have compiled a list of native plant sales and nurseries that specialize in native species.

For more information and to be put on Go Green Galloway's email list, contact bfiedler@gallowaytwp-nj.gov or jesseconnor@comcast.net.

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