

Hummingbird Hill Native Plant Nursery

September 2024 Newsletter

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It's time for fall planting! This cool weather is the perfect time for planting herbaceous native plants, as well as trees and shrubs. The nursery will continue to be open until the end of October—we've spent the summer growing lots of plants and have a wide selection for your fall planting project!

What's New At the Nursery

WE ARE OPEN BY APPOINTMENT ON SATURDAYS, SUNDAYS, MONDAYS, & TUESDAYS until the end of October. To schedule an appointment, please visit our website!

LAST CALL FOR HABITAT CORRIDOR PLUG TRAYS!

September is the last month for Habitat Corridor Plug Trays this season. These trays are available to be picked up until October 1st.

How does this work? Simply visit the Habitat Corridor Plug Tray link on our website and fill out the requested info, which includes info about your site (sunlight, etc).

Let us know how many trays you'd like and the week you would like to pick them up. We'll select a mixture of species that would naturally grow in your site: ones that grow well together and will combine to make a functioning habitat. When your preferred planting week approaches and the plants are ready to be picked up and planted, we will reach out to you! Payment is made at the time of pickup.

Pricing: Our custom-designed habitat corridor plug trays include 50 plugs of 10-15 species native to your site for \$180 (\$3.60 per plug).



SUN SPECIES WE HAVE RECENTLY RESTOCKED:

- Arrow-leaved Violet (*Viola sagittata*) – 4” pots
- Lyre-leaf Sage (*Salvia lyrata*) –1 qt pots
- Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) – 1 qt pots
- Yellow Giant Hyssop (*Agastache nepetoides*) – 1 qt pots
- False Nettle (*Boehmeria cylindrica*): 1 qt pots
- Wild Basil (*Clinopodium vulgare*): 1 qt pots
- Maryland Golden Aster (*Chrysopsis mariana*): 1 qt pots

SHADE SPECIES WE HAVE RECENTLY RESTOCKED

These harder-to-grow-from-seed woodland species have just become available in small batches:

- Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*): 1 qt pots
- Aniseroot (*Osmorhiza longistylis*): 1 qt pots
- Sensitive Fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*): 4” pots
- Christmas Fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*): 4” pots
- Heart-leaved Golden Alexander (*Zizia aptera*): 4” pots

New Species!

We've recently added some new species to our collection.

A couple include:

- Narrow-leaved Tick Trefoil (*Desmodium paniculatum*): full sun, dry soil
- Heart-leaf Golden Alexander (*Zizia aptera*): part shade, dry and very dry soil

Trees and Shrubs

Fall is the perfect time to plant trees and shrubs, helping them get established well before the onset of next summer's heat. We have a variety of trees and shrubs currently available, ready for your habitat corridor. Let's take a look:



Wild Hydrangea
(*Hydrangea arborescens*)



Northern Hackberry
(*Celtis occidentalis*)



Pennsylvania Blackberry
(*Rubus pensilvanicus*)



Striped Maple
(*Acer pensylvanica*)



Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)

Right:
Smooth Alder
(*Alnus serrulata*)



Black Cherry
(*Prunus serotina*)



Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)

More Trees and Shrubs:

- Eastern Boxelder (*Acer negundo* var. *negundo*)
- American Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*)
- Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)
- Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*)
- Common Dewberry (*Rubus flagellaris*)
- Red Mulberry (*Morus rubra*)
- Black Raspberry (*Rubus occidentalis*)
- Tulip Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)
- Black Walnut (*Juglans nigra*)



American Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*)

Life in a Habitat Corridor

Notes and photos from my explorations in a full sun, very dry habitat corridor

If you have a habitat corridor, you've likely seen firsthand how much life it can bring to your property: bees drinking nectar from blooms, butterflies flitting from one native plant to another, and maybe even birds visiting on winter seed heads. But, just how much life is there beyond what we can easily see happening in a habitat corridor?

Curious to answer this question, I grabbed my camera and macro lens and waded into my own habitat corridor for a closer look. I chose to focus my observations on five native plants and the life I found on and around them:

1. Carolina Elephant's Foot (*Elephantopus carolinianus*)



My habitat corridor (a portion pictured above) is dominated by natives like broomsedge and grey goldenrod.



2. Maryland Golden Aster (*Chrysopsis mariana*)

3. Broomsedge (*Andropogon virginicus var. virginicus*)

4 & 5. Early Goldenrod (*Solidago juncea*) and Grey Goldenrod (*Solidago nemoralis var. nemoralis*)

Over the course of just a few days, I went into the habitat corridor often: sitting beside a goldenrod patch, walking through the tall broomsedge, and sometimes just watching from afar. I took photos and made notes of what I saw. Here, I share a little of the life I found—insects and animals that are likely hard at work in your habitat corridor as well. Let's take a look:

1 Carolina Elephant's Foot (*Elephantopus carolinianus*)



Small Skippers seem to favor Elephant's Foot—just one plant in the sun had three on it!



My Habitat Corridor's Conditions

My habitat corridor is in full sun, with very dry soil, and is dominated by plants that thrive in these dry conditions, including Broomsedge and Poverty Oatgrass. Perennials like Grey Goldenrod, Creeping Lespedeza, and Frost Aster grow in large quantities among the grasses, with low-growing natives including Dwarf Cinquefoil and Wild Strawberry thriving beneath them. See the full list, below.

Native Plants in My Habitat Corridor So Far

Shrubs/Trees

- Pennsylvania Blackberry
- young Winged Sumac
- young Black Locusts

Vines/Woody Species

- Virginia Creeper
- Common Greenbrier
- Poison Ivy

Perennial Native Plants

- Dwarf Cinquefoil
- Long-leaf Bluets
- Plantain-leaved Pussytoes
- Wild Strawberry
- Arrow-leaved Violet
- Grey Goldenrod
- Wrinkle-leaf Goldenrod
- Creeping Lespedeza
- Maryland Golden Aster
- Carolina Elephant's Foot
- Early Goldenrod
- Low St. Andrew's Cross
- Wavy-leaf Aster
- Calico Aster
- Frost Aster
- Yarrow

Annual/Biennial Natives

- Horseweed
- Sweet Everlasting
- Common Yellow Wood Sorrel

Grasses

- Broomsedge
- Little Bluestem
- Poverty Oatgrass
- Purpletop



Carolina Elephant's Foot has small flowers, but I discovered that small flowers don't equate to less insect activity. The ones in my habitat corridor were buzzing with life, particularly on hot, sunny days. I found that their small flowers attract all sorts of equally small insects, from tiny bees and wasps to small butterflies like Hairstreaks.

Interesting fact: Carolina Elephant's Foot usually has flowers that are light purple; less commonly, they can be white instead, like many of the ones that naturally occur in my habitat corridor.



The bees and wasps that I saw at Carolina Elephant's Foot were mostly small, like this Halictid or Sweat Bee that came for nectar. It was covered in little white grains of pollen, unintentionally pollinating the plant as it went from flower to flower.



This Fall Field Cricket was hanging out on a leaf!



Gray Hairstreaks showed up every time I watched!



This Assassin Bug (left) was not interested in pollen or nectar. Rather, it was waiting for a pollen or nectar-loving insect to come along, ready to impale the insect using its long "beak." There are many species of assassin bugs, and these predacious insects are often adorned with bright colors and interesting features, such as the Wheel Bug, an assassin bug with a characteristic sharp-pointed "wheel" on the top of its body.

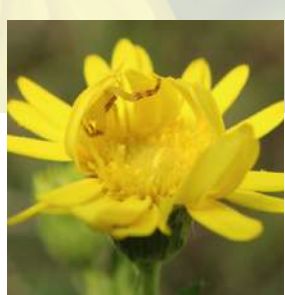
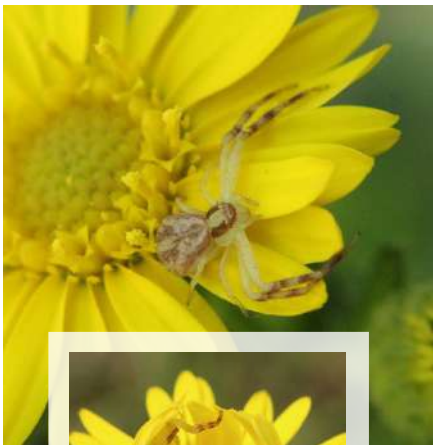


Parasitic Wasps, like the one above, are wasps that rely on a particular species of insect for survival, just the way some insects rely on host plants. They lay their eggs into this host or on its food source; the eggs hatch inside the host insect, and the larvae grow inside the host's body while the host remains alive. Finally, the larvae will emerge, killing the host, and pupate. This parasitic wasp was scouting the foliage of Carolina Elephant's Foot, likely looking for a host insect or the correct foliage to lay eggs on (notice the large ovipositor—the long point at its rear—that indicates that this wasp is a female).

2 Maryland Golden Aster (Chrysopsis mariana)

Maryland Golden Asters are just starting to bloom in my habitat corridor, far from what they will become. As I write this, each plant has only a few flowers open, so I was surprised by the insect activity that I discovered around them. I have far less Maryland Golden Asters than any of the other plants I observed, but, all the same, it turns out that their yellow flowers provide life in my habitat corridor.






I barely spotted this Crab Spider, as it sat, perfectly blending into the yellow of these blooms (crab spiders can change from white to yellow to match their surroundings). The first time I saw it, it was sitting out in the open (top photo), but, when I came back, it had devised a new strategy, completely hidden under the curved petals of a flower as it waited for prey (lower photo).



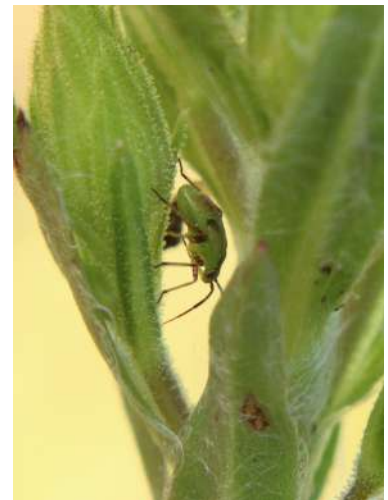
I spotted flies pollinating every species of native plant that I observed, from Carolina Elephant's Foot to Grey Goldenrod.



I saw Soldier Beetles,  above, drinking nectar on both Maryland Golden Asters and Goldenrod.



Scentless Plant Bug




3 Broomsedge

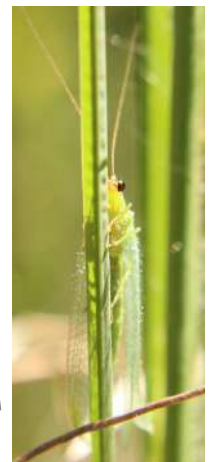
(*Andropogon virginicus* var. *virginicus*)

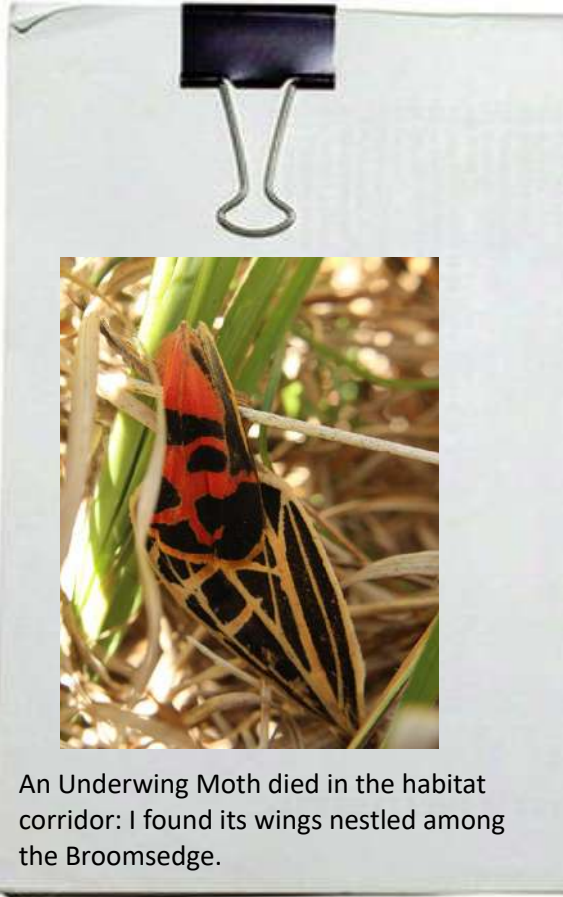


My habitat corridor seems to be supporting mostly small butterflies (and lots of them!) at this time of year: Pearl Crescents (above), Hairstreak species, Eastern-tailed Blues, and even a Common Buckeye.



When I think of the life Broomsedge gives to insects and animals, I usually think of its seed heads, which provide food for birds like White-throated Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos during winter. Of course, it's too early for the seed heads of Broomsedge (or even its wind-pollinated blooms), so I didn't know what I'd find mingling with it in my habitat corridor. Surprisingly, I found more life on Broomsedge than I thought I would.  Lacewing





An Underwing Moth died in the habitat corridor: I found its wings nestled among the Broomsedge.

Eastern-tailed Blues were constantly fluttering among the Broomsedge as they looked for nectar and host plants. It was a delight to see their bright blue wings everywhere I went!



An ant tending to a dead ant



I spotted this tiny Jumping Spider, left, scampering among the lowest of the Broomsedge stems. Interestingly, jumping spiders attack their prey by literally leaping onto them. Perhaps this little one was looking for something to eat.



I was surprised by the number of moths (in the daytime) that I spotted! Just walking through the tall grasses caused a handful to float up and away every time.



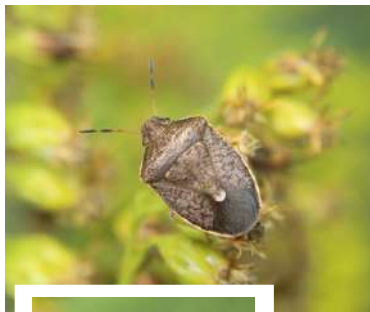
Grasshoppers! I found many species of grasshoppers on the Broomsedge in my habitat corridor, both males and females (notice the large ovipositor on the right photo, indicating a female).



4 Early Goldenrod & Grey Goldenrod

(Solidago juncea and Solidago

nemoralis var. nemoralis)

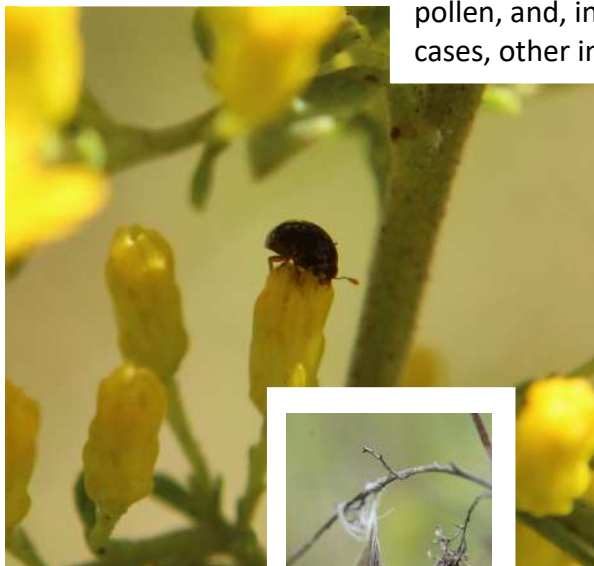


Plant-Eating Stink Bug

In my habitat corridor, the blooms of Early Goldenrod are just finishing up for the year, their golden haze quickly replaced by Grey Goldenrod, beginning to bloom as I write this. The two are quite different—Early Goldenrod is taller, rhizomatous, and begins blooming in July and is less abundant in my dry habitat. Grey Goldenrod, on the other hand, spreads only by seed and is much more dominant here, reaching 1 to 2 feet tall even in the driest portions of my corridor. During their bloom time, these two goldenrod species have been covered with insects seeking nectar, pollen, and, in many cases, other insects.



Crab Spiders, like this one, right, blend right in to the yellow flowers of Goldenrod!



Right, a Soldier Beetle.



a feather dangling from last year's goldenrod stem



This Long-Horned Beetle, right, is a Locust Borer, named because its larva require Black Locusts as a host plant. The coloring of adult Locust Borers mimic wasps, giving them a layer of protection.



Bees and wasps! I found many interesting species of bees and wasps depending on the goldenrod for nectar and pollen.

Scoliid Wasps

Scoliid Wasps are large solitary digger wasps that can often be found on native goldenrod plants in late summer. In my habitat corridor, I spotted both the Double-Banded Scoliid Wasp and the Blue-Winged Wasp. The larvae of Scoliid wasps feed on beetle larvae (grubs), like Green June beetles. Adult Scoliid wasps borrow into the ground (hence the term “digger wasp”), attaching an egg to the grub. Their larvae will then feed on it until adulthood.



Blue-Winged Wasp



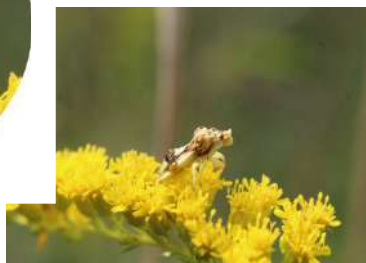
Pictured above, Potter Wasps and Zethus Wasps flew among the Grey Goldenrod every time I watched. Both are frequent visitors to late-summer plants like Goldenrod.



Double-Banded Scoliid Wasp



Ambush Bugs



Ambush Bugs, like the one pictured above, are frequent on Goldenrods, though they are difficult to notice, thanks to their remarkable ability to blend in with their surroundings. This camouflaging is, in fact, all part of their plan to find a meal. Ambush bugs are predatory insects that sit, often hiding down in between the individual flowers of goldenrod, and wait for unsuspecting insects to come along. When an insect comes for nectar or pollen, the Ambush bug strikes, and, at last, it's lunch time! In fact, one way I often find Ambush bugs is by noticing a dead insect sitting on a goldenrod flower: if you look closer, you'll often see the culprit, still well camouflaged.

A bee flying to a flower may seem pleasant and carefree, but, in reality, it's a dangerous feat: every time an insect lands on a flower could be its last time, like this bee that was caught by a hidden Ambush Bug. (If you look carefully, you can see the Ambush Bug!)



Details about The Plants

Carolina Elephant's Foot



(*Elephantopus carolinianus*)

Height: 12-18"

Spread: 12"

Soil: Moist-Dry

Sun to Part Shade

Maryland Golden Aster



(*Chrysopsis mariana*)

Height: 1-2'

Spread: 1-2'

Soil: Dry-Very Dry

Sun to Part Shade

Broomsedge



(*Andropogon virginicus* var. *virginicus*)

Height: 3-4'

Spread: 1-2'

Soil: Moist-Very Dry

Sun to Part Shade

As I finish up this project, the Early Goldenrod is completely past, the Carolina Elephant's Foot is further along, and the Grey Goldenrod has reached full bloom, though just barely. I walked through the habitat corridor this morning (without my camera, as my pages were already full) and saw a Carpenter Bee on the Grey Goldenrod, something I didn't see during my observation days. There's still so much out there that I didn't capture, so many insects that I'm sure I haven't seen yet, though they're nestled in my habitat corridor, thriving because of the combination of native plants.

My explorations show that it's true: if you have the right plants, in a habitat layout, the life will come. From outside my habitat corridor, I couldn't see the ambush bugs, the wasps and bees, the beetles and lacewing. I couldn't even see all the Eastern-tailed Blues, though their shimmering blue wings were obvious and prolific once I began exploring. There is so much more life than I knew in my habitat corridor—and I bet it's in yours too. Take a look around, if you get the chance. Grab your phone or a camera, or maybe just sit and watch. Your habitat corridor, too, is a place filled with life, little wildlife-and-plant interactions that are going on right beside you, thanks to the native plants that you share your land with. ■

Early Goldenrod



(*Solidago juncea*)

Height: 3-4'

Spread: 2-3'

Soil: Medium- Very Dry

Sun to Part Shade

Grey Goldenrod



(*Solidago nemoralis* var. *nemoralis*)

Height: 2'

Spread: 1-2'

Soil: Medium- Very Dry

Sun to Part Shade

All photos courtesy
Hummingbird Hill
Native Plant Nursery