

Living Landscapes: Trees and Shrubs 2026

Speakers

Tom Borgman

After a 42-year career as a naturalist and natural resource manager, Tom enjoys landscaping with native plants and sharing his excitement for creating habitat for all types of living creatures.

LIVING LIFE ON THE EDGE, Tom Borgman

During this presentation, we will investigate some ecological concepts of forest edges and succession. We will also look at the plants and wildlife that inhabit edges and how you can create some edge like habitat on your property.

Brian Jorg

Brian F. Jorg is Manager of the Native Plant Program and Bowyer Farm for the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden. Brian manages the Boyer Wetland, a 650-acre property in Warren County, Ohio. Among his responsibilities is the Native Plant Program. This program deals with a wide range of projects that deal directly with the propagation and conservation of our native flora. This also includes the recovery projects of endangered and critically imperiled plants, working with such groups as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Trillium research is also being conducted.

Included in these duties are pollinator projects, including growing over 300 native plant species that are important nectar and larval species. These plants are also available to the public through sales.

Brian also oversees the Oak Program. This involves growing 6,000-8,000 oak trees of various native species every year for community and conservation projects. Being an avid birder, Brian supervises the bird banding program and monitoring of avian populations at the wetland. There have been 211 bird species documented on the wetland so far.

GREAT NATIVE SHRUBS FOR THE HOME LANDSCAPE, Brian Jorg

We will learn about the wonderful diversity of our native shrubs, their culture and wildlife value. From deer resistance to keystone pollinator qualities, we will look at the individual characteristics that make this group of plants valuable to any landscape. From full sun to shade, we will discuss shrubs for any landscape situation.

Jim McCormac

Jim McCormac worked for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources for 31 years as a botanist, and later specializing in wildlife diversity projects, especially involving birds. He has authored or coauthored seven books, including *Birds of Ohio* (Lone Pine 2004); and *Wild Ohio: The Best of Our Natural Heritage* (Kent State University Press 2009). The latter won the 2010 Ohioana Book award. Along with Chelsea Gottfried, he authored *Gardening for Moths* (Ohio University Press 2023). His latest book is a *Naturalists' Guide to the Odonata of Ohio* (2024), written with Dave McShaffrey and MaLisa Spring.

Jim also writes a column, *Nature*, for the Columbus Dispatch, and regularly publishes a natural history blog. He has written numerous articles in a variety of publications and has delivered hundreds of presentations throughout the eastern United States. He was named 2015 Conservation Communicator of the Year by the Ohio League of Sportsmen.

Jim is an avid photographer, shooting a range of natural history subjects. He has had hundreds of photos published in various forums, including the TV show *Jeopardy*. His photography can be sampled at <https://www.jimmccormac.com/>.

CATERPILLARS MAKE THE NATURAL WORLD GO 'ROUND, Jim McCormac

The biggest group of herbivores in Ohio, by a long shot, are caterpillars. Their collective biomass probably outweighs that of Ohio's thriving white-tailed deer population. Nearly all of these caterpillars are the spawn of moths: 4,000 species? 6,000? No one knows with certainty, as moths are not nearly as well known as their butterfly counterparts (only around 160 species present in Ohio).

Native plants grow caterpillars, and caterpillars are the fuel that underpins ecological food webs. We would not have most of our songbirds were it not for native plants growing these tube steaks on legs, and a great many other animals depend heavily on caterpillars. Feeding evidence of caterpillars on one's plants is by no means a bad thing – it should be a mark of pride for the gardener. Those that grow natives, and by extension the caterpillars that have co-evolved to feed on them, are contributing greatly to conservation.

This talk will be a pictorial romp through the crazy and fascinating world of Lepidopteran larvae and the roles that they play. Some caterpillars are nearly beyond belief, resembling sea slugs, tree snakes, bird droppings, plant bits and all manner of other mimicry. Most importantly, we will look at how our work with native flora benefits the natural world around us via the production of caterpillars.

Sam Settlemyre

Sam has spent the last 6 years working at the Civic Garden Center where he runs the native plant nursery, organizes habitat restoration efforts, and teaches classes for the public. His focus has been on urban and suburban green spaces including urban forests, pollinator gardens, and community gardens. He is especially passionate about forests and forest restoration efforts. It's this strong connection to forests that has inspired his love of trees, especially growing trees from seed.

AN INTRODUCTION TO TREE CARE AND ADVOCACY, Sam Settlemyre

Trees do so much for people, but what can we do for trees? Trees provide people with cleaner air, carbon sequestration, reductions in urban heat island effect, and so much more! While trees do so much for us, what can we do in return for them? In this presentation we will explore the ways in which you can set up trees for success through better planting techniques, regular care and maintenance. We will also explore some of the current threats, disease and otherwise, to trees and what we can do to help. Finally, we will discuss some ways in which we can advocate on behalf of trees in our community and help them live long healthy lives.

Greg Torres

Greg Torres is the owner of Active Outdoors LLC, a business focused on Conservation Horticulture and Environmental Education. He is a Naturalist and Horticulturist. Greg has been a staunch advocate, community organizer and educator on conservation and the use of native plants to enhance beauty, cultural heritage and wildlife.

Greg is the recipient of the Taking Root's 2023 Johnny Appleseed Award, and his work with Cincinnati Parks has contributed to three Ohio Parks and Recreation Awards for Conservation and Land Management and Interpretive Programming. Greg is also a host on the Nature Guys podcast and produces native plant educational videos and presentations.

PLANTING FOR BIRDS, Greg Torres

Plants and birds have a long history of working together. As an example of mutualism, this development and relationship between plants and birds has had far reaching consequences, encouraging co-evolution that enhanced the survival of both plants and birds. "Planting For Birds" explores some of these relationships, tips how we can grow plants to create habitats to help birds thrive, as well as resources for selections of beautiful native plants that support our local ecosystem.