



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 18, 2023

MEDIA CONTACTS: Deb Klenotic, DEP, dklenotic@pa.gov; Shannon Powers, Agriculture, shpowers@pa.gov; Mike Parker, Fish and Boat, michparker@pa.gov; Wesley Robinson, DCNR, werobinson@pa.gov; Travis Lau, Game Commission, trlau@pa.gov; Zach Appleby, PennDOT, zappleby@pa.gov

Governor's Invasive Species Council Celebrates Pennsylvania Native Species at North Creek Nurseries

Landenburg, PA -- The Governor's Invasive Species Council underscored the importance of sustaining native plants, insects, and animals on land and in our waters during a visit to North Creek Nurseries today to celebrate the second annual [Pennsylvania Native Species Day](#).

The [Governor's Invasive Species Council](#), chaired by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, includes seven state agencies and 14 organizations in local government, academia, environmental advocacy, and agriculture and other industries.

The council created Pennsylvania Native Species Day to celebrate the state's diverse native plants, insects, and animals and increase Pennsylvanians' understanding of the importance of protecting them against the proliferation of invasive species.

We can all play a role in caring for our environment," said **Dana Rhodes, Plant Protection Division Chief, Department of Agriculture**. "The simple act of planting a native plant in place of an invasive one bolsters our ecosystem and increases biodiversity, making a positive impact on the world around us. Partners like North Creek Nurseries can support your efforts by helping ensure we're picking the right plants for a greener future."

A biodiverse native ecosystem provides a range of benefits, including food sources, timber, and outdoor recreation, such as fishing and hiking, and related economies. In an ecosystem where they have no natural predators, invasive species damage food chains and habitats for native species. They also have negative economic, health, and recreation impacts, as documented by the council's [2022 Pennsylvania Invasive Species Impacts Survey](#).

"Today we celebrate and highlight the importance of supporting Pennsylvania's native species. As invasive species proliferate, we encourage Pennsylvanians to plant local when possible, at home

and in their communities, as native trees and plants are the foundation of a biodiverse ecosystem," said **Susan Weaver, Compacts and Commissions Manager, Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Office of Water Programs**. "DEP programs are helping to plant native vegetation, increase American eel populations, and remove invasive hydrilla plants and zebra and quagga mussels from lakes.

"Pennsylvania's public and private lands must be protected from the proliferation of invasive nonnative species that has occurred as global commerce and travel have increased," said **Matt Keefer, Bureau of Forestry Assistant Director, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)**. "DCNR provides training and outreach on invasives to help raise awareness and minimize impacts. We also work with other state and federal agencies for early detection and rapid response, and participate in Pennsylvania's Invasive Species Management Plan. We all strive to prevent and reduce the extent of invasives, because protecting our native plants and forests is critical to keeping Pennsylvania landscapes beautiful and productive for future generations."

"Native species are an essential part of life in Pennsylvania, including in our aquatic ecosystems," said **Bob Caccese, Director of Policy, Planning, and Communications for the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission**. "These native fish, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, and plants bring our waters to life, and where managed and protected responsibly, provide incredible recreational value and sustenance. Many of these delicate species are also nature's best indicators of clean water, which is beneficial to everyone."

"Pennsylvania is home to 480 species of native birds and mammals, all of which depend on native ecosystems to survive. Non-native invasive plants and insects can have a devastating effect on these delicately balanced ecosystems and the native species themselves. Controlling invasive species is a complex and expensive endeavor, but we continue working with partners and expending resources to fight invasives, because we must ensure healthy habitats for wildlife for current and future generations of Pennsylvanians," said **Scott Bearer, Habitat Planning and Development Division Chief, Pennsylvania Game Commission**.

"Working in hand with everyday Pennsylvanians and our partners across the state is critical to addressing threats to biodiversity at every stage," said **Jonathan Fleming, Chief Executive Director of Highway Administration, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation**. PennDOT put roadside seed mixture updates into effect this year, removing key non-native species, and its Keystone Pollinator Habitat Program is providing transportation rights-of-way for native, pollinator-positive plantings.

North Creek Nurseries owner Steve Castorani gave a tour of the grounds, highlighting native gardens and a stormwater management system that includes native species. North Creek is a 70 percent native plant grower and wholesaler.

Video and photos of today's event will be available later today at <https://pacast.com/m?p=23100>.

State parks and organizations are joining the council's effort by offering public education and volunteer activities. For more information, see <http://NativeSpeciesDay.pa.gov>.

###