



Habitat Gardening

Habitat Gardening in Central New York

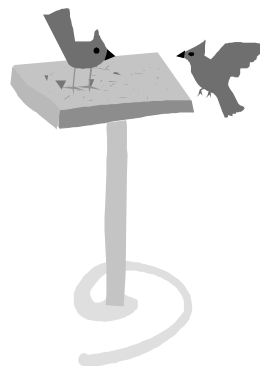
A Chapter of Wild Ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes

Avian flu: What you should know

- The “bird flu” currently found in Asia and a few locations in Europe is caused by the H5N1 strain of the avian influenza virus. Approximately 60 human deaths in Southeast Asia have been attributed to the virus since 1998. Most of these victims were in close contact with infected poultry.
- As of October 2005, no cases of avian influenza (H5N1) have been detected in wild birds, domestic poultry, or people in North America.
- The current risks to human health are extremely

low because the virus is not easily spread between people. However, if the virus mutates into a form that can be transmitted between humans, the risk of contracting the bird flu from other people would be far greater than the risk of contracting the virus from wild or domestic birds.

- Although exposure to the bird flu is currently not a threat in North America, people can contract other illnesses from sick birds and their fecal material. Avoid handling sick birds and always wash your hands with soap and water after filling bird feeders.



Please let our advertisers know you saw their ad in our newsletter!

There is no need to stop watching, feeding, or attracting birds to your yard because of the bird flu.

From Cornell Lab of Ornithology
www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/News/avian_flu.htm

Did you know?

- Mosses may lose up to 98% of their moisture, and still survive to restore themselves when water is replenished.
- Commercial moss harvesters strip branches bare and sell the sheets of moss to the horticultural industry. After being harvested, it may require decades for moss to recover.
- Mosses and lichens are very sensitive to air pollution, so their health in your neighborhood indicates air quality.

From Gathering Moss by R Kimmerer

Words of Wisdom



I like paper. I like it a lot – its weightless strength, its inviting blankness. I like how it waits, the clean white rectangle framed by the smooth oak of my desk. The oak grain ripples and catches the light like no petroleum byproduct ever could. ...But despite my love affair with forest products, a log truck going by on the highway makes me sad, especially on a rainy day when

clumps of moss still cling to the trunks, watered by the dirty spray of passing semis.... I can't help but poke at my own inconsistency, like a tongue probing at a loose tooth. I surround myself with real forest products, yet rail against the clear-cuts my desires create. ...I'm caught in the same conflict that we see on the fragmented landscape.

From Gathering Moss by Robin Kimmerer pp. 143-144

Don't miss Robin Kimmerer at our January 22 meeting at Liverpool Library!



Volume 1, Issue 4

Winter 2005–2006

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A Habitat Garden puzzle to help you while away the hours until spring

ACROSS

2 The winterberry is an example of this kind of plant

4 This kind of precipitation can damage leaves

6 The larval form of some beetles is called this

8 "If a healthy soil is full of death, ___ is also full of life: worms, fungi, microorganisms of all kinds... Given only the health of the soil, nothing that dies is dead for very long."

Wendell Berry

10 In lists, the opposite of "do not"

11 "A long, long way to run"

12 A favorite spring flower, being crowded out by garlic mustard

14 This golden flower comes in many beautiful species: showy, stiff, scented, wreath, zigzag, 'Fireworks,' and more

16 If you want holly or bayberry berries, you need a mama and a ___

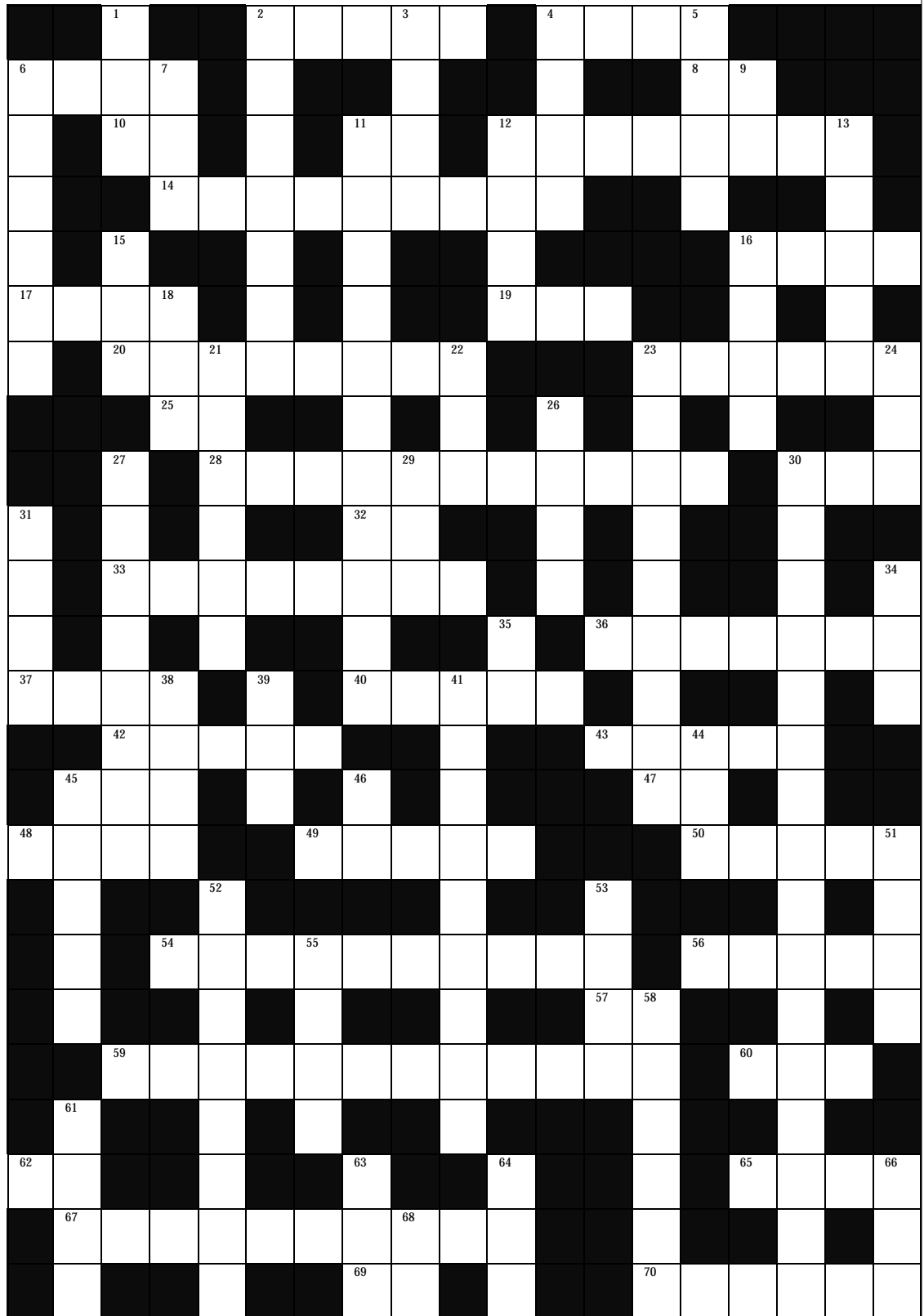
17 To ___ ice, calcium

magnesium acetate (CMA) is less harmful than rock salt

19 Never ___ endangered plants in the wild

20 Many beautiful varieties of this Monarch larval host plant exist

23 This native groundcover has unusual "brown



jug" flowers close to the ground

25 With natural landscaping, you don't need the precision of this special number to plan garden beds

28 This commonly planted tree is one of the most invasive plants in the NE

30 Used to recycle or compost

32 ___ last, we're starting to recognize the beauty of our native plants!

33 This native grass comes in "big" and "little"

36 You don't need to fight 'em - they're part of a healthy garden ecology

37 This type of woodland plant can be a great native groundcover for shady areas

40 Initials of the premier native plant, natural landscaping group in CNY!

42 Sara Stein wrote the book ____ Garden

43 These helpful creatures can eat your food scraps right in your basement

45 An important nest building material, in short supply in turf-covered suburbs

47 "A deer, a female deer"

48 Plants sometimes have many common ones, but all have a unique botanical one

49 Contrary to its name, this river ____, with its beautiful bronze exfoliating bark, doesn't have to grow near a river

50 Your fall leaves are too valuable to put out with the ____; compost them instead

54 Because of habitat loss

and pesticide use, we have a ____ crisis resulting in farmers in California having to rent bees for their crops

56 Materials used to prevent moisture loss and weed growth

57 Roots grow down, stems grow ____

59 We have this kind of garden tour in summer

60 If you want berries, you have to have at least ____ bushes for dioecious plants like spicebush, holly, or barberry since male and female flowers are on separate plants

62 "A note to follow sol"

65 We'll learn about this underappreciated kind of plant at our January meeting

67 A beautiful kind of garden to protect our water resources

69 "Too old __ plant trees for my own gratification, I shall do it for my posterity."

Thomas. Jefferson

70 Flowering shrubs planted near a home "____" the landscape and break up strong vertical or horizontal lines

DOWN

1 A swelling on a plant stem consisting of overlapping immature leaf or petals

2 This native evergreen will grow in shade

3 What you'll be, with the exercise you get when gardening

4 Scarification is making a small cut in a ____ seed coat so it can absorb water

5 Turk's cap and Canada are native varieties of this plant type

6 Sideoats and blue are two of this kind of grass

7 A type of wetland with very poor, highly acidic soil, and a high water table

9 "A drink with jam and bread"

11 One of Cornell's winter Citizen Science bird projects is Project ____

12 This is a slug's worst enemy

13 NY state tree: sugar ____

15 SUNY-ESF is researching ways to protect this elegant tree, which once graced the streets of most American cities

16 The largest individuals of this majestic evergreen were cut down in the 1700s to make masts for the King's Royal Navy

18 If you pinch out the growing ____, a plant will become bushier

21 HGCNY has a great ____ of programs during the year!

22 The hummingbird moth, unlike most, is a diurnal moth active in the ____

23 This native plant is falsely accused of causing allergies

24 Unlike maple syrup, maple cream is sold in the fall, 6-8 months after the sap ____

26 The outer covering of the stem of woody plants, which protect a layer of food-conducting tissue

27 A beetle is destroying this kind of native habitat shrub

29 The habitat gardener was happy to see that something ____ the leaf of the larval host plant

30 Invasive relative of milkweed, but doesn't nourish Monarch caterpillars

31 The main organ of transpiration and photosynthesis in higher plants

34 Native tree, important for baseball equipment

35 "Earth laughs __ flowers." Ralph Waldo Emerson

38 The place on a stem where leaves are attached

39 Exclamation made when people first understand all the advantages of native plants, natural landscaping

41 This favorite bird's brain is optimized for remembering where he cached 1000s of seeds

44 "Let it __!" is a good motto for organic gardeners.

45 Low-lying wetland with grassy vegetation

46 "A name I call myself"

51 Santa's phrase: ____ ho.

52 Seals - both false and true

53 Jack-in-the-pulpit, calla lily, philodendron are all members of this family

55 Any of the main branches arising from the trunk or bough of a tree

58 Modified leaves surrounding the sexual parts of a flower - variously colored, shaped, and patterned to attract pollinators

61 Handy equipment for moving things around in the garden

63 Your garden doesn't have to be a work of ____ - birds and other creatures prefer it a little messy!

64 Both for aesthetics and habitat value, it's good to have more than ____ bush of each type

66 The energy source that powers the circle of life

68 Do not plant invasive plants; ____ plant native plants!

ANSWERS on page 8

Citizen Science in Winter



In addition to Project Feederwatch, which runs from November through early April, you can participate in two other winter Citizen Science projects to help scientists ... and birds!



Christmas Bird Count

One day between December 14, 2005 —January 5, 2006

You can be a part of history! Audubon's Christmas Bird Count is the oldest and largest citizen science event in the world. For over a hundred

years, people have gathered together during the winter holiday season to count birds. For many people, this is an annual tradition that has passed from one generation to the next. In the process, they have created a vast pool of bird data that is the most comprehensive available for mid-December to early January. It is a fertile source of information on the status and distribution of early winter bird populations and is studied by scientists and interested people the world over. And it all starts with you!

While there is a specific methodology to the CBC and you need to count birds within an existing Christmas Bird Count circle, everyone can participate! If you are a beginning birder, you will be able to join a group that includes at least one experienced birdwatcher.

Local count circles are in Montezuma, Ithaca, Watertown, and in other places.

To sign up or for more information, go to www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/

Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), one of the world's largest volunteer efforts of its kind. In addition to its value as a research study, the GBBC allows people of all ages and backgrounds to celebrate birds and provide vital information about North America's birds.

This is the ninth year of the popular event, developed and managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, with sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited store owners. People are encouraged to enjoy the birds around them by going out during any or all of the count days and keeping track of the highest numbers of each bird species they see. People then report their sightings over the Internet at www.birdsource.org/gbbc.

The Great Backyard Bird Count helps everyone, whether they choose to watch birds only around their home or make the effort to see which birds are using public lands.

The web site is full of tips of all kinds, including information on bird feeding; how to use binoculars; how to make your yard bird-friendly; and how to identify birds, especially those tricky, similar-looking species. There are even tips on how to be a bird-friendly family.

Besides counting birds yourself, you can also contribute by helping people without Internet access enter their data online.

Visit the website at www.birdsource.org/gbbc/



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The Great Backyard Bird Count

February 17-20, 2006

During the weekend of February 17 through 20, people across the North American continent are encouraged to count the birds in their backyards and report them over the Internet, as part of the Great

Native plants:

Dogwoods (*Cornus*)

Say “dogwood,” and you probably picture a small tree with beautiful white flowers, each of which has four-petals indented at the tip.

You’re partly correct. Yes, the flowers are beautiful, but like poinsettias, dogwood “flowers” are actually bracts. The true flowers are very small and yellowish-green.

And yes, the flowering dogwood you pictured is the best-known dogwood, but it’s only one of a whole family of native dogwoods – the genus *Cornus*. These plants can be a beautiful part of your habitat garden.

But if you pictured the commonly-sold Kousa dogwood (*Cornus kousa*), you’re picturing a plant native to Asia. Yes, the flowers are beautiful and the big berries look inviting, and they are ... for Asian primates. If you’re interested in providing food for our native birds, choose a native dogwood, whose beak-sized, high-fat fruit is a nutritious meal.

Flowering dogwood
(*Cornus florida*)

A small, deciduous, understory tree, native to eastern and central U.S. The showy “flowers” (the bracts) develop into shiny red fruits birds eat.

Flowering dogwood prefers cool, moist acidic soil with organic matter. It tolerates partial shade, but will produce more flowers in full sun. It doesn’t like heat, drought, pollution or road salt. It’s also subject to various diseases, although some cultivars have some resistance.

Why not try other native dogwoods like the following?

Pagoda dogwood
(*C. alternifolia*)

You might guess that the pagoda dogwood is an Asian, not native, plant, but its name refers to its pagoda-like branching structure.

This dogwood is a small deciduous understory tree, at most about 25 feet tall. Unlike the flowering dogwood, it has flat clusters of small white flowers that develop into blue-black fruit in summer. They don’t last long though because birds love these nutritious berries! Fortunately, the tiny red berry stalks (pedicels) that remain are ornamental.

Cool, moist acidic soil and partial shade is best, but they’ll also grow in full sun if it’s not hot and dry.

Interesting fact: One key to identifying dogwoods is to look at whether their leaves grow on the opposite or alternate sides of a twig. Along with maple and ash, dogwood leaves grow on the opposite sides of the twig ... except for pagoda dogwood—hence, the botanical name *C. alternifolia*.

Gray dogwood (*C. racemosa*)

A multi-stemmed, suckering shrub, 10- to 15-feet tall with an equal spread. In a sunny location, this dogwood can develop a rich purple-red autumn foliage. The prolific creamy white flower clusters develop into white berries. Take a good look because birds devour them quickly!

Like the pagoda dogwood, the remaining red berry stalks are attractive.

Gray dogwood is easy to grow and adaptable to sun or shade, wet or dry locations.

Silky dogwood (*C. amomum*)

This 6- to 10-foot, multi-stemmed shrub grows quickly into a rounded shape. Its creamy white flowers develop into blue berries that birds love.

It’s easily transplanted and prefers moist, fertile soil. It grows in full sun or partial shade, and tolerates wet areas.

Red osier dogwood
(*C. sericea*);
also known as *C. stolonifera*

A 6- to 10-foot deciduous, multi-stemmed shrub with a rounded habit. It has flat clusters of dull-white flowers and white to pale blue fruit.

It grows in full sun or light shade; prefers moist soil, but is adaptable. This is most often grown for its red stems, adding winter interest.

Bunchberry (*C. canadensis*)

Last and least—but only in size. In charm, this 3-inch tall dogwood is tops. This small plant has the prototypical dogwood type of “flower” (again, actually bracts), which develops into attractive red berries wild-life eats.

Not surprisingly, it likes a forestry setting: peaty, acidic, humusy soil and dappled shade. With time, it will spread, but much more slowly than you’d like!



Interesting fact

Two-thirds of all the migrant songbirds observed in one study were found in shrubs and understory trees—the layers most often missing in the typical residential landscape.

- Janet Marinelli,
Brooklyn Botanic Garden



Red Osier dogwood
C. sericea
(also known as *C. stolonifera*)

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Invasive Plant Profile

Burning bush (*Euonymus alata*)

Winged Burning Bush (*Euonymus alatus* (Thumb.) Siebold)

Did you know that burning bush has berries?

Also known as winged wahoo, winged burning bush, winged euonymus, winged spindle-tree, Japanese spindle-tree .

Origin: Asia

Background: Introduced as an ornamental plant about 1860. Widely planted for fall color.

Distribution and Ecological Threat: Burning bush is found from New England to northern Florida and the Gulf Coast and also in Illinois. It threatens a variety of habitats including forests, coastal scrublands, and prairies where it forms dense thickets, displacing many native woody and herbaceous plant species. Hundreds of seedlings are often found below the parent plant in what is termed a "seed shadow."

Description:

- **Plant:** multiple stemmed shrub with conspicuously winged stems, normally 5 to 10 feet high but mature plants can grow to 20 feet.

- **Leaves:** deciduous, dark green, in pairs along stem, turning brilliant red-purple in autumn.

- **Flowers, fruits and seeds:** inconspicuous, greenish flowers in late spring; red-purple fruits mature during summer.

- **Spreads:** expands locally through vegetative reproduction and to new areas through bird dispersal of seeds.

Prevention and Control: Do not plant burning bush. Manual, mechanical and chemical means are available to control established plant-

ings. Seedlings can be pulled by hand. Shrubs can be repeatedly cut to the ground to control re-sprouts, or cut and treated with systemic herbicides like glyphosate.

Try these native alternatives :

red chokeberry
(*Aronia arbutifolia*)

Virginia sweetspire
(*Itea virginica*)

highbush blueberry
(*Vaccinium corymbosum*)

silky dogwood
(*Cornus amomum*)

fragrant or shining sumac
(*Rhus aromatica* or *R. copallina*)

From *Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas*

www.invasive.org/eastern/midatlantic/
This is an excellent resource for information about invasive plants!



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UPDATE: An unexpected benefit from our Black Swallowwort Service Project

Last July at Green Lakes State Park, HGCNY members helped hold back the onslaught of Black Swallowwort. We successfully eliminated much of the pestilential invasive in our assigned area before it went to seed and became even more of a problem.

Beside helping protect habitat, we found it to be a wonderful opportunity for fellowship. But we found another unexpected outcome, though: at least three of our crew who worked on this project noticed black swallowwort growing elsewhere.

Randi Starmer noticed it growing on one of our Show Me Help Me tours, Janet Allen noticed right in her own yard (ugh!) and our youngest member, Gregg Welcher, age 8, noticed it growing at Beaver Lake Nature Center.

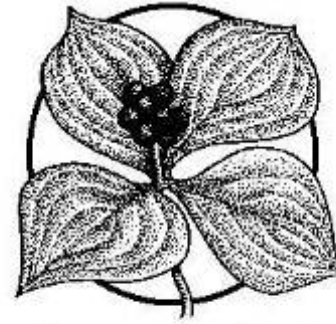
It's unfortunate that it's growing in so many places, but creating public awareness of this problem is one key to controlling it. It's unlikely that we would have noticed this weed if we hadn't participated in this effort.

Be on the lookout for this invasive plant next summer!



Black Swallowwort

Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. *Illustrated flora of the northern states and Canada.*



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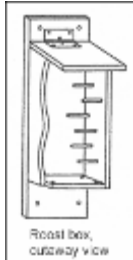


Winter habitat for birds

Providing Water

Birds need water year-round for drinking and bathing. Set up at least one birdbath. The surface should be easy to clean, and there should be a gently sloping shallow end. Place the birdbath away from the feeders to keep the water from being contaminated. Rinse it daily before refilling it, and clean it once a week, using a 5–10 percent solution of chlorine bleach. You can use a birdbath heater that has a built-in thermostat to warm up the water just enough to keep it from freezing. *Never add antifreeze or other chemicals to the water.*

From Humane Society
www.hsus.org/wildlife/urban_wildlife_our_wild_neighbors/feeding_birds_in_winter/



Roost box, curzeby vgw
 From Cornell Lab of Ornithology: All About Birds

www.birds.cornell.edu/u/programs/AllAboutBirds/AttractingBirds/OtherAttractants/BuildRoostBox.html

Providing Cover

Roosting boxes or natural plant covers can also aid birds seeking protection from cold weather. Shelter is also needed for protection against natural predators, such as birds of prey. Cats are unnatural predators and birds also need shelter to escape from them. Be

sure to clean out old nests from houses to help reduce the possibility of parasitic bugs surviving the winter. It also allows birds the opportunity to roost in a clean house.

www.wbu.com/edu/winter_feeding.htm
 From Wild Birds Unlimited Educational Resources

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We're on the web at
www.hgcny.org

Mark Your Calendar

Wednesday, December 28
at 7:00 pm
Holiday Get-together
at the Allens

We've spent the year together learning about native plants, natural landscapes, and how to share our world with birds, butterflies, and other creatures. Now is the time to relax and just have fun together, as we think ahead to spring. Feel free to bring a plate of cookies or other holiday goodies!

401 Parsons Drive, Westvale.
Directions at www.hgcny.org
or call 487-5742 for more information.

Sunday January 22 at 2 pm
Gathering Moss by Robin
Kimmerer, SUNY-ESF pro-
fessor and award-winning
author; Liverpool Library

Be prepared to forever change your ideas about moss! Drawing on her experiences as a scientist, mother, teacher, and writer of Native American heritage, Professor Kimmerer explains the stories of mosses in scientific terms as well as in the framework of indigenous ways of knowing.

Her book, *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses*, won the John Burroughs Medal in 2005.

Sun. February 26 at 2 pm
Habitat Gardening Jeopardy
at Liverpool Library

Unlike the TV show, there will be little fame or fortune associated with winning, but we'll have a lot of fun and learn about plants and habitat gardening as we compete as teams.

Looking ahead to spring

March 26 Attracting Butter-
flies to the Habitat Garden
with Jim D'Angelo

April 22 FIELD TRIP
Cornell's Lab of Ornithology
AND lunch at Moosewood
Restaurant.



Snow cancellations

If the weather turns bad on a scheduled meeting day, please check our website at www.hgcny.org for cancellation information or contact Janet at 487-5742 or stewardship@twcny.rr.com.