

C H A U T A U Q U A



BIRD  
TREE  
&  
GARDEN  
CLUB



## What's in Bloom?

### Black-Eyed Susans!

The Black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia*) around Chautauqua are looking splendid. A really tough annual, biannual or perennial, it can tolerate drought, thank goodness, because that's what nature served up for us this summer.

Now I'm reading your minds - I can almost hear you saying "annual? biennial? perennial? what? Pick a lane!"

Not so easy. Most of the Black-eyed Susans in Chautauqua are the perennial *Rudbeckia fulgida*. But the ones growing along the roadside are often *Rudbeckia hirta*\* - the native biennial wildflower. They seem like perennials because they return each year, but they have a two-year life cycle - the first year they germinate and grow leaves and the second year they bloom and die.

About the common name, Black-eyed Susan - I was walking with a friend this week and she said we aren't supposed to call them that anymore. She said the name was a reference to domestic violence. I was fully prepared to re-train myself but then I did a little googling. What I found is that the name actually refers to a poem by John Gay called *Sweet William's Farewell to Black-Eyed Susan*, a ballad written in 1719 and arranged to music shortly afterward. (John Gay became most famous for *Beggar's Opera* in 1728.)

In the ballad, Susan's eyes were black because she had been crying in anticipation of her Sweet William leaving her for a long sea voyage. The ballad ends with an adieu, but gardeners were apparently not satisfied with the ambiguity. Noticing a pretty flower in the meadows with a dark eye which blooms at the same time as the *Dianthus barbatus*, they called the *Rudbeckia* Black-Eyed Susan and the *Dianthus* Sweet William as a sign that the lovers would in fact enjoy eternal love, celebrated annually in our gardens. Now that's pretty sweet.

Wildflower.org has this handy little **Benefits Fact Sheet** on their website about the Black-eyed Susan, which I copy-pasted for our newsletter:

**Use Ornamental:** Color, Showy, Blooms ornamental, Wildflower meadow, Pocket prairie

**Use Wildlife:** Nectar-Bees, Nectar-Butterflies, Nectar-insects, Seeds-Granivorous birds

**Use Medicinal:** Amerindians used root tea for worms, colds; external wash for sores, snakebites, swelling; root juice for earaches. (Foster & Duke)

**Conspicuous Flowers:** yes

**Attracts:** Birds , Butterflies

**Larval Host:** Gorgone Checkerspot, Bordered Patch butterfly

**Deer Resistant:** High

\* *Hirta* means "hairy" in Latin, as I'm sure many of you knew already. In this case, it refers to the scratchy bristle-like hairs on the leaves of the Rudbeckia. Look for more "Little Latin Lessons" in our [exploreCHQ app](#). Chautauquan Amy Gawtry, who has been teaching and learning Latin for 30 years, has been helping us with this project and is putting together a Latin language scavenger hunt using the new tree markers. Look for that in 2023!

- Leslie Renjilian

- photo by Betsy Burgeson of the Campbell Garden



Above: Marta McDowell will present our Tuesday Brown Bag Lecture this week. Details are below with more information on our website.

## Day by Day by the BTG

**Monday, August 8**



**6:30 PM [Lake Talk with Twan Leenders, Ecological Restoration Manager, Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy](#)**

Location: Heinz Beach

**Tuesday, August 9**



**12:15 PM [BTG Brown Bag Lecture: "Unearthing the Secret Garden: The Gardening Story of Frances Hodgson Burnett" with Marta McDowell, author, teacher, and horticulturist at the NYC Botanical Garden](#)**

Location: Smith Wilkes Hall

Frances Hodgson Burnett's classic *The Secret Garden* has inspired generations of readers to cultivate their own bits of earth. Feel free to **bring your lunch** and listen to Marta's lecture as she explores Burnett's life, work, and the passion for flowers and gardening that inspired her book.

\*\*\*Marta's books will be available for purchase and signing following the lecture.

**4:15 PM [Garden Walk with Horticulturalist Joe McMaster](#)**

Location: Smith Wilkes Hall - lakeside

**Wednesday, August 10**



**4:15 PM [Tree Walk with Forester Jack Gulvin](#)**

Location: Smith Wilkes Hall - lakeside patio

**Thursday, August 11**



**7:30 AM [Bird Walk with Ornithologist Twan Leenders](#)**

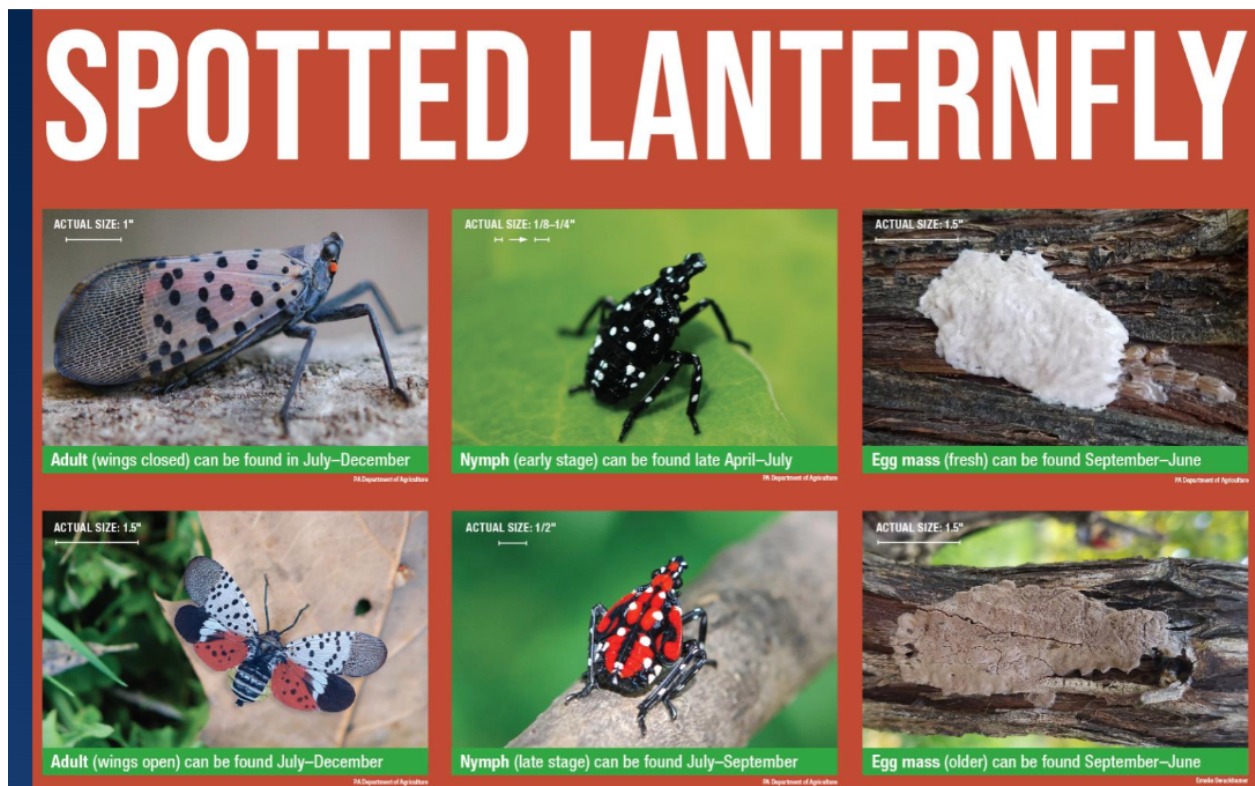
Location: Smith Wilkes Hall entrance

\* Binoculars encouraged, dogs discouraged!



**\*\*Most BTG walks involve some uneven ground. We suggest sturdy shoes.\*\***

## What's a - Buzz?



Have you starting watching TikTok yet? You may think it's a time suck (and you may be right), but there is some really interesting stuff out there. My kids are helping me refine my algorithm so that I am served almost exclusively nature and design videos (with a dash of cute animal videos as icing on top).

My favorites are Justin Davies, [JustintheTrees](#), a woodworker with 1.3M followers who just finished carving a map of the US out of blocks of lumber from each state's tree, and Alexis Nikole, the [Black Forager](#), who has 3.9M followers. If you've never "done" TikTok, this is the moment to screw your courage to the sticking place and click one of those links!

Most of the content I see is light and educational, but this week my daughter forwarded me a viral TikTok about the spotted lantern fly in New Jersey and I went down a [rabbit hole](#). If you're from Delaware, New Jersey, eastern New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, or Virginia, you've likely seen them in real life. Wherever you are from, you've likely heard of them, but the good news is that they aren't here in western New York. Yet.

However, Twan Leenders has found the invasive Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) threatening to take over the banks of the Chadakoin River. That is bad enough, but it could attract the invasive lantern fly which could in turn devastate the county's grape industry.

This is where you can help as a Citizen Scientist. If you see the lantern fly, report it. If you find Tree of Heaven, remove it as advised or [report it to the DEC](#).

Click here to read an [8/7/22 article in the Jamestown Post-Journal](#) about the issue. (Note: this is just a newspaper article - no one is going to make you watch TikTok. Yet.)

- Leslie Renjilian
- Poster from Penn State Extension Service

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## What's My Part?

### **Citizen Science** By Dennis McNair, PhD

It took millions of people, me among them, to cause the disruptions that humans have wrought upon the planet's ecosystems, causing permanent change in Earth's future.

We call the current geologic age the **Anthropocene** in recognition of human-caused

changes in climate, biodiversity and the earth's crust caused by our overuse of fossil fuels, conversion of natural communities to cities and croplands, perturbations of components of the air and water on Earth's surface and so on.

Most of those human effects have occurred not because of negligence or active destruction but rather through a lack of knowledge of natural systems and a perfectly understandable pursuit of easier lifestyles. Now most people realize the destruction that's been caused, the systemic corrections are clear to us, the methods for reversal and repair are apparent, but too many of us believe that the solutions to the problems that we and our ancestors have caused are too great for any of us to remediate.

If it were up to me, individually, to make a significant difference, I'd agree with that conclusion. I'm convinced that line of thinking should not be used to justify continued destruction, but my contribution to any solution is likely to be a small one. However, if we are willing to act collectively we can certainly save some of the systems that support us, and we absolutely have the tools and knowledge to stop the damage.

Collectively, concerned observers and advocates are probably the most potent transformers of public policies regarding environmental and scientific concerns. Professional scientists and ecologists with degrees and other credentials may start a process, but it is unlikely to advance until many people collect an immense amount of data. That's where **citizen science** comes in. When enough ordinary folks who are fascinated, or at least curious, start to pay close attention to anything, they can establish a movement that is impossible to ignore. For example, the winter ranges of birds in North America have been largely determined by amateur birders reporting their observations made during the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Counts throughout the continent. When I was a grad student, I took an ornithology class, and a big part of the course was devoted to Mrs. Margaret Nice's observations on songbirds. Mrs. Nice was the wife of a psych professor at Ohio State and devoted much of her time to self-funded observation of birds around Columbus, Ohio. She was extraordinary and was eventually recognized by professional ornithologists as a major contributor to knowledge of birds, but that was never her "job," it was simply her passion. My own research area, entomology, has been made much richer by the data gathered by amateur citizen scientists for centuries. For instance, Charles Darwin studied to become a clergyman at Cambridge but spent much of his spare time watching and collecting beetles, which started him on a path

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to becoming a ship's naturalist and to eventually developing the theory of evolution by natural selection.

At the Chautauqua Institution (CI), the care of our lake and its study has involved both professionals and amateurs. Without the data collected by citizen scientists, the professional projects carried out by professionals of the Jefferson Project and SUNY-Fredonia would never have advanced or become of widespread regional concern. On the CI grounds, the Bird, Tree and Garden Club (BTG) has coordinated and publicized several efforts to improve the health of the lake. Following the old saying "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem," BTG has successfully urged CI and its inhabitants to lessen their negative impacts on Chautauqua Lake and to become exemplary long-term neighbors along this magnificent lake's shoreline.

[Joining BTG](#), the [Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy](#) or other such organizations, advances the preservation of the natural abundance we all share in our lovely region of New York State. The understandings we develop here apply to the rest of the earth as well. So, whether your interest is in water quality, fish, insects, birds, or just reveling in the beauty to which they all contribute, you directly or indirectly become citizen scientists and help move us all toward clearer understanding of the interrelationships that make our lives richer. Indeed, in the long run, those are the underlying interrelationships that make our lives possible.

Dennis M. McNair, PhD

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**A Big Thank You to Jeanne Wiebenga for a wonderful presentation to the Life Member Annual Luncheon last Friday!**

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