

Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden's

Native Plant Symposium

Talk Descriptions and Speaker Biographies

November 21, 2026



Adventures in Native Plant Exploration

**BRIAN JORG, Manager of the Native Plant Program,
Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden, 9:00AM–9:50AM**

Not all floral forays are walks in the park. Join us as we reminisce about past plant exploration and the bears, snakes and moose that made it memorable. We will look at some great plants in the wild, and the stories behind finding them. From orchids on the Arctic Circle to the trillium of the Blue Ridge Mountains, we will look at what it takes to chase plants in the wild.

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. Advanced 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 through public 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 also oversees the bird banding program and monitoring of avian populations at the wetland. Two hundred and eighteen bird species have been documented on the wetland so far.

Coming to Know Plants

ROY DIBLIK, Co-Owner, Northwind Perennial Farm, 9:50AM–10:40AM

This talk will focus on the importance of knowing plants and their relationships to each other and the planting site. We will discuss the nature of plants beyond the general awareness of bloom time, flower color, height and soil conditions. Coming to Know Plants places you closer to their lifestyle needs within community. This thoughtful approach will create a greater interest and deeper enjoyment of landscaping open space or simply gardening.

This is a return engagement of Roy Diblik. One of the highest rated speakers we've ever had.

Roy Diblik is co-owner of Northwind Perennial Farm located in Burlington, Wisconsin. He has been growing traditional and native perennials since 1978. His garden designs emphasize plant relationships to stewardship strategies and costs.

Roy's design and planting projects include the Louis Sullivan Arch at the Modern Wing at the Art Institute of Chicago and the lakeside plantings for the Oceanarium at the Shedd Aquarium and recently the perennial plantings for Scott Byron's new garden design for the Chicago History Museum. His book 'The Know Maintenance Perennial Garden' highlights his perennial gardening practices.

<https://www.northwindperennialfarm.com/>

Finding Joy in Seedy Establishments

ED ATKINSON, Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden, 11:00AM–11:50AM

Propagating native plants from seed can be a hard nut to crack – but it doesn't have to be! Join Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden's own Ed Atkinson on a deep dive into every step of making a seed into a success. All aspects of the seed starting process will be covered, from the basic terminology and tools to small scale methods for advanced seed "conditioning" that will take you back to your science fair days.

Ed Atkinson is a horticulturist at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden specializing in garden maintenance, plant propagation, and nursery growing. Ed had a brief career in restaurant management before leaving to study horticulture at Cincinnati State. He spent time working for the Cincinnati Park Board and Boone County Arboretum before finding a happy home at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden, where he has developed a love of everything rare and unorthodox that he can find to bring to the garden.

Lessons from Stoneleigh: Reimagining Traditional Landscapes with Native Plants

ETHAN KAUFFMAN, Director of Horticulture, Stoneleigh: A Natural Garden, 12:50PM–1:40PM

With a 150-year history as a private estate, Stoneleigh: A Natural Garden became one of the newest public gardens in the Philadelphia region in 2018. Informed by the growing understanding of the connectedness of all living things, a vision arose during the transition: to reimagine a historical landscape as an ecologically vibrant wonderland of native plants. Relying on both tried-and-true gardening techniques and experimentation, the emerging garden is an exuberant exploration of cultivating native plants in the modern landscape.

Join Stoneleigh Director Ethan Kauffman as he reveals the unexpected plants, expressive design philosophy, and unconventional practices that are driving Stoneleigh's exciting transformation.

Ethan Kauffman is the first director of Stoneleigh: A Natural Garden, where he has led the transition from a private estate to a public garden over the last 10 years. He developed his love of the natural world exploring the Susquehanna River hills in southeastern PA and cultivated his horticultural perspective over two decades of public horticulture in the South. Drawing on influences from both regions, he enjoys creating a garden experience at Stoneleigh that inspires others to garden for beauty, wildlife, and the health of our planet.

New and Underused Perennials

BRENT HORVATH, Owner & President, Intrinsic Perennial Gardens, Inc,
1:40PM–2:30PM

Learn which new plants might stand the test of time and which old plants still deserve your attention. Sure, there are many great new plants every year, but which ones will survive and thrive in the garden for years to come? A plant breeder for 30 years and grower of perennials for 35 will share his favorites and hopefully some of yours, too.

Brent Horvath, owner and president of Intrinsic Perennial Gardens, Inc., is a third-generation gardener, second-generation nurseryman, and first-generation American. He grew up in the business, working for his mother and father at their companies, Intrinsic Landscaping, Intrinsic Perennial Gardens and Flowers by Intrinsic.

Over the years, he was inspired by the work of the great plantsmen, his father Lajos Horvath, George Radtke, Roy Diblik, Roy Klehm and Alan Bloom. He was encouraged to find plants of his own to introduce, and found his first introduction, Penstemon d. 'Pink Dawn' in a field of Penstemon digitalis. This discovery led to continued plant selection and hybridizing work in a wide variety of genera. Brent pursued a BS in Horticulture from Oregon State University, and in 1991, started growing finished perennials for the wholesale trade.

Today, his company, Intrinsic Perennial Gardens, Inc. lists over 500 hardy perennial varieties, including ornamental grasses, sedums, geums, hard to find natives and plants for the green roof trade.

Brent has developed over 100 new perennials, under Intrinsic Introductions. This includes Rudbeckia 'American Gold Rush' PP#28,498, recognized as 2023 Perennial Plant of the Year by the Perennial Plant Association and Andropogon gerardii 'Blackhawks' PP#27,949. He has 14 Geum varieties beginning with 'Mai Tai as a Cocktail series. There are 20 Sedums including 'Thundercloud' and 'Pure Joy' and Brent is widely known as a sedum expert. In all, Brent holds more than 60 plant patents. His genetics and supply can be found @ www.intrinsicintroductions.com.

Brent's book, "The Plant Lovers Guide to Sedums" from Timber Press received a gold award from Garden Writer's Association.

When Brent is not breeding plants, he can be found paddleboarding, meadow stalking, prairie-dogging and traveling.

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The Miniature World of Mosses and Lichens

ROBERT KLIPS, Associate Professor Emeritus, The Ohio State University,
3:00PM–3:50PM

Mosses are seedless plants that lack the internal plumbing that enables other plants to grow tall. Lichens, aptly described as "fungi that invented agriculture," are dual organisms that epitomize symbiosis. Being small, desiccation-resistant and requiring very little nutrition, both mosses and lichens are found in environments that are too stressful for most plants to grow. They are a delight to find on bark, rocks, and barren ground. We will explore their different growth forms and methods of reproduction and learn how to identify the most common Ohio species. Special attention will be paid to ones that were discovered here or are named for Ohio botanists.

You might think this one is for the off-the-deep-end nerds, but you also might be wrong!

Robert Klips is an associate professor emeritus in the Department of Evolution, Ecology, and Organismal Biology at Ohio State University, where he taught for over twenty years. He currently manages the bryophyte and lichen specimen collections in the herbarium at OSU's Museum of Biological Diversity. Skilled in botanical macrophotography, Klips served as the photographer for the Ohio Division of Wildlife's Common Lichens of Ohio Field Guide and is the author of the book Common Mosses Liverworts and Lichens of Ohio (Ohio University Press, 2022), he frequently conducts fieldwork and educates nature study groups about the identification, ecology, and distribution of Ohio plants and lichens.

<https://eeob.osu.edu/people/klips.1>

Questions & Answers Panel

ALL SPEAKERS, 3:50PM–4:40PM