

### *Addendum: Additional Details and Answers to Chat Questions*

*Elaine Mills, presenter - recorded September 26, 2020*

A number of participants in the live Zoom session posed questions about specific plants:

- Regarding a problem of Creeping Juniper with breaking branches: *Juniperus horizontalis* is generally considered to be quite hardy, but it can begin to brown for a number of reasons, including improper watering, poor soil conditions, and pests. Branch tips turning brown and dying back may be a sign of blight. Contact our [Help Desk](#) for assistance.
- The common name Jacob's Ladder refers to numerous species in the genus *Polemonium*. Some are native to North America, and others are found in South America and Eurasia. *Polemonium reptans* is native to eastern North America from the Mid-Atlantic west to Missouri. Dwarf Jacob's Ladder may be a hybrid of the non-native *Polemonium caeruleum*. 'Northern Lights' is a sterile selection.
- Lemongrass (*Cymbopogon*), sometimes used in edible landscaping, is a genus of grasses indigenous to Asia, Africa, and Australia, so it was not included in this presentation on native ground cover species.
- I cannot find any information on cultivars of the native Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*). There are hybrids available in the nursery trade, but those appear to be crosses of the Asian species or of the American with Asian species. As I said in the presentation, it is generally better to go with straight species to make certain that the plants are providing support as nectar and pollen sources and larval host plants.
- Regarding growing conditions for Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*), it flowers most abundantly in full sun, but can also perform well in bright shade. One participant reported that her mountain mint does well in 75% shade under the crown, but away from the root zone, of white pine.
- Robin's Plantain (*Erigeron pulchellus*) reproduces both by wind-dispersed seeds and by stolons (above-ground stems) that radiate from a parent plant. Propagation by sowing seeds is challenging since only a small percentage will germinate. It can be propagated most easily, as I described, by division of the evergreen basal rosettes. Root or stem cutting are other techniques that can be used.
- On the question of pruning St. John's-wort (*Hypericum prolificum*), this shrub naturally has a rounded habit, so pruning every year isn't necessary. If a more densely-mounded shape is desired, it can be pruned from early March to mid-April since it blooms on new wood.
- Violets can spread both through rhizomes and self-seeding. They have two types of flowers: the showy ones on short stems above the leaves and unopened self-fertilizing

***Addendum: Additional Details and Answers to Chat Questions***  
***Elaine Mills, presenter - recorded September 26, 2020***

(cleistogamous) flowers hidden beneath their leaves. They don't need to bloom to reproduce. Violets can potentially bloom from late winter until summer, but they will stop blooming if the temperatures reach above 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Deadheading (pinching off faded flowers) can help encourage reblooming. The fritillaries that use violets as a larval food source, are small butterflies with checkered patterns on their wings.

- In the chat, a participant noted that Virginia Creeper grips trees in a different way than English Ivy. The tendrils of the former end in small attachment disks, while English Ivy attaches by means of adventitious roots that conform to the nooks and crannies of the bark surface and exude a glue-like secretion to lock them in place. Virginia Creeper usually grows vertically and is not as likely to girdle a trunk. The main concern would be if it grows up into a tree canopy where it could potentially reduce the tree's ability to photosynthesize. If a significant percentage of a tree's leaves are in sunlight, this is not a problem.
- A question was raised about the difference between native Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) and invasive Wintercreeper (*Euonymus fortunei*). The native vine has five leaves arranged palmately, like the fingers of a hand, and the foliage turns brilliant colors in the fall. The foliage of Wintercreeper is evergreen with an opposite arrangement on the stems. See a [fact sheet](#) more information.

**There were also more general questions about categories of plants:**

- One participant pointed out that landscape designer Thomas Ranier has questioned the ability of ferns to function as ground covers because he feels that their fronds grow straight up and weeds can invade. The fronds of some ferns (such as Royal Fern (*Osmunda spectabilis*)) grow in tall, erect clumps, but in my experience, clustered species of ferns with vase-shaped, cascading or fan-like foliage, can act effectively as ground covers. See this excellent blogpost by Piedmont Master Gardeners on [Landscaping with Ferns](#).
- Another participant raised a question about whether an unknown fern expanding in her yard would be a problem. Hay-scented Fern (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*) is a native fern that can spread aggressively by rhizomes in favorable conditions to form clonal colonies. Some homeowners appreciate its ability to cover ground. This type of spread is of greatest concern in natural areas because of the plant's ability to dominate a forest understory, suppressing the development of tree seedlings. See an article from the [New York Forest Owners Association](#) in which they discuss these tendencies and this [link](#) to scholarly articles on its control.

### *Addendum: Additional Details and Answers to Chat Questions*

*Elaine Mills, presenter - recorded September 26, 2020*

- Some Goldenrods can spread aggressively. Those seeking less rambunctious plants might consider the woodland species Blue-Stemmed/Wreath Goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*) or Zig-Zag Goldenrod (*Solidago flexicaulis*) that do not crowd out other plants.
- Unfortunately, I did not have any suggestions about plants that could compete with invasive Japanese Stiltgrass, but I have located this [list of recommended grasses and forbs](#) that can “stand up” to the invasive plant.
- In response to a question about rabbits eating Moss Phlox (*Phlox subulata*), I suggested trying Wild Pink (*Silene caroliniana*). Although there are no truly “rabbit-proof” plants, Arlington Regional Master Naturalists have compiled a list of [Virginia Rabbit-Resistant Non-Woody Natives](#)
- In this presentation, the following plants were mentioned as possible lawn replacements: Plantain-leaved Pussytoes (*Antennaria plantaginifolia*) can take light foot traffic; Lyreleaf Sage (*Salvia lyrata*) can take mowing and some foot traffic; Pennsylvania Sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*) can provide a grass-like look in dry shade when turf won’t grow but would require stepping stones for walking. For a brief discussion of No-Mow Fescue and Buffalo Grass as turf alternatives see the [“Rethinking Your Lawn”](#) section (at 27:27) of my presentation on [“Climate-Conscious Gardening”](#) and at 1:02:03 of my presentation on [“Grasses, Sedges & Rushes for the Home Landscape.”](#)
- A participant asked for recommendations for ground covers under fruit trees. An important characteristic of such plants is that they provide an easy-to-maintain cover, requiring no mowing or heavy weeding which would disturb the tree roots. I suggested Barren Strawberry (*Geum fragarioides*) as a nice, dense, mat-forming cover that could choke out any weeds. Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*) would be another attractive choice, providing supplemental fruit. There are a number of posts online which discuss plantings under fruit trees in the context of permaculture. Some native plants, such as Echinacea, Lupine, False Blue Indigo, and New Jersey Tea are mentioned as companion plants in a guild that would benefit the tree with pest prevention, fertilization, and pollination. The yellow-flowered Indian Mock Strawberry (*Potentilla indica*, formerly *Duchesnea indica*) that grows rampantly in gardens is distinct from the above-mentioned strawberry species and is considered a lawn weed.
- Some questions were raised regarding erosion control, including under a birch tree. Among the plants I mentioned are Moss Phlox, Partridge Pea, Little Bluestem, Common Rush, River Oats, Creeping Juniper, ‘Gro-Low’ Fragrant Sumac, St. John’s-wort, Golden Ragwort, Hairy Alumroot, Wild Ginger, Foamflower, White Wood Aster, Christmas Fern, Appalachian Sedge, Plantain-leaved Sedge, and Virginia Creeper. You

***Addendum: Additional Details and Answers to Chat Questions***  
***Elaine Mills, presenter - recorded September 26, 2020***

would choose one plant over another according to the sun exposure and soil moisture conditions. See also a list of recommended native plants from the [Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District](#).

- In response to the chat question on ground covers for acidic soil under evergreen trees, see this list of [Native Plants That Grow Under Pines](#).
- Plants with preferences from consistently moist to wet soil include Blue-Eyed Grass, some Goldenrods, Common Rush (even standing water), River Oats, Golden Ragwort, Hairy Alumroot, and Ostrich Fern.

**Other questions were of a more general nature:**

- The term “lean soil” refers to soil that is lacking much organic matter and containing fewer nutrients than rich soil. For some plants, such as herbs and alpine plants, this is a requirement. Plantain-leaved Pussytoes (*Antennaria plantaginifolia*) and Robin’s Plantain (*Erigeron pulchellus*) were two plants mentioned in the presentation that prefer lean soil.
- Questions were raised about the flopping tendencies of Golden Alexander (*Zizia aurea*) and White Wood Aster (*Eurybia divaricata*). This condition can have several possible causes. If light levels are low, a plant may grow leggy in an effort to reach light and then become unable to support itself. Overuse of fresh compost or fertilizer, creating an overly rich soil high in nitrogen, can also result in lush growth which topples easily. Rainwater received after a significant dry spell or watering from above can also weigh down stems. Finally, flopping can be a sign that plants need to be divided.
- One technique I mentioned for controlling height and encouraging shorter, stronger stems is pinching back. (See reference to Rough-Stemmed Goldenrod (*Solidago rugosa*) in the talk. *The Well-Tended Perennial Garden: Planting & Pruning Techniques* by Tracy DiSabato-Aust provides excellent instructions on methods to prevent splaying.
- I mentioned that I had seen Common Rush (*Juncus effusus*) used in the central section of a rain garden. See this guide to [Rain Garden Design and Construction](#) for other recommended plant species for that purpose.
- I mentioned Partridge Pea and Little Bluestem as possible components of a meadow garden. For more details, see this extensive fact sheet from the University of New Hampshire on [Planting for Pollinators: Establishing a Wildflower Meadow](#) and landscape architect Larry Weaner’s lengthy post [Wildflower Meadows: Let’s Get Real](#).

***Addendum: Additional Details and Answers to Chat Questions***  
***Elaine Mills, presenter - recorded September 26, 2020***

Landscape designers Thomas Ranier and Claudia West discuss the role of different categories of meadow plants in their book *Planting in a Post-Wild World*.

- I think many of the shorter sun-loving plants I introduced at the beginning of the presentation, plus Green-and-Gold, would be attractive ground cover plants in a flower bed getting established.



Here is a photo to illustrate the team method I described for removing English Ivy.

- For those seeking clarification on the invasiveness of Liriope, see the [fact sheet](#) I created on the MGNV website. Both *Liriope spicata* and *L. muscari* are considered invasive in Arlington and Alexandria, Virginia.
- In answer to the question about the best time to replace invasive plants with native plants, I would say that it sometimes depends on what invasive species you are removing. For example, there is a very narrow window of time when Lesser Celandine is in bloom and can be easily spotted and dealt with. Bare branches of Bush Honeysuckle might be hard to identify before it blooms in June, and Porcelainberry can be most easily distinguished from other vines when its colorful fruit develops in

*Addendum: Additional Details and Answers to Chat Questions*

*Elaine Mills, presenter - recorded September 26, 2020*

the fall. Evergreen plants like English Ivy and Wintercreeper could be removed at any time.

- In general, I think early spring would be the best time because if any plants re-sprouted, you would have another chance to deal with them early in the growing season. Native plants you use as replacements would have a good chance of getting established if you plant them in the spring rather than in the heat of the summer.