

1st Quarter 2026 Frederick County Master Naturalists and Nature Council Newsletter

In this issue:

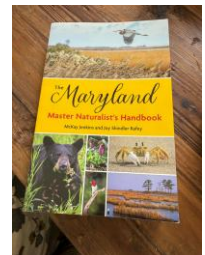
- Fall 2025 Master Naturalist Class
- Maryland Native Plant Guide for the Piedmont Region
- Volunteer Appreciation and Master Naturalist Celebration Event
- Climate Summit
- Logging Volunteer Hours
- Spring Native Plant Sales
- City Nature Challenge
- Book Club
- Nature Council Update
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Advanced Training
- Announcements
- Maryland Native Plant Awareness Month Bill

1st Quarter 2026

Well, we are certainly off to a cold start for the calendar year, but I am hoping the chilly winds, snow, and ice have not prevented you from enjoying the great outdoors entirely. If you are like me, you may be enjoying some wildlife viewing in your winter gardens and at your feeders from the comfort of your home. According to that mammal (“rodent” sounds so harsh) named Phil up in Punxsutawney, PA, we may have six more weeks of winter! So, this is a great time to (1) log your volunteer hours for 2025 if you haven’t already done so, (2) participate in the annual great backyard bird count, (3) make plans for updates to your native plant gardens this season, (4) curl up with your favorite nature book, or (5) write an article for the next issue of the newsletter! Whichever activity you are pursuing, I really hope to see you in person on March 21<sup>st</sup> at the annual Volunteer Appreciation and Master Naturalist Celebration Event (rescheduled from January) or at a Nature Council meeting on Zoom! Be sure to read through this issue to learn about all the great upcoming events including the Mobilize Frederick Climate Summit, the Cunningham Falls Maple Syrup Festival, and the City Nature Challenge. Stay warm!

Fall 2025 Maryland Master Naturalist Class

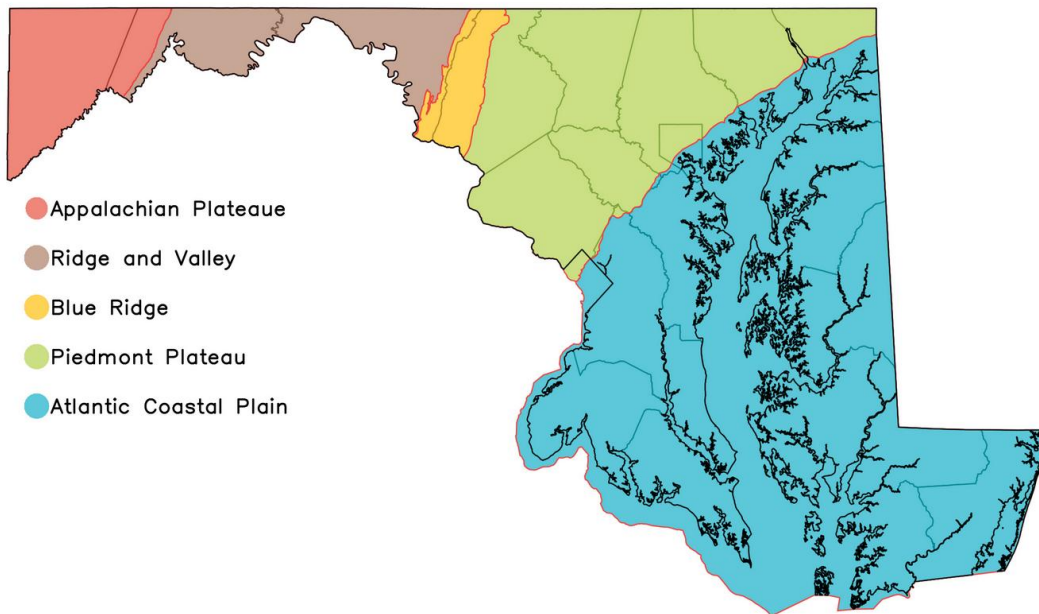
The most recent class of Maryland Master Naturalists of Frederick County wrapped up their classroom instruction in December 2025 and are off to a great start with their projects, volunteer hours, and advanced training hours to complete their Master Naturalist certification in 2026. This year’s class marked the ninth Maryland Master Naturalist class sponsored by Frederick County Nature Centers and Frederick County Nature Council. We look forward to working alongside these new Master Naturalist interns at upcoming events and projects. Come meet these wonderful individuals at the Volunteer Appreciation Event rescheduled for March 21<sup>st</sup>!



## [The New Maryland Native Plant Guide for the Piedmont Region!](#)

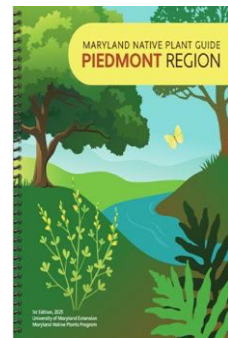
As a part of the new University of Maryland Extension Maryland Native Plants Program, the first of three planned guidebooks highlighting native plant landscaping in Maryland's Piedmont region is now available. Much of Frederick County is in the Piedmont region, while the Catoctin Mountains signal the beginning of the Blue Ridge region.

Maryland Physiographic Provinces (MGS)



The engaging 180-page spiral bound book is a great reference for native plant and gardening enthusiasts. It includes:

- educational articles to support gardening success
- photos and descriptions of over 300 featured plants
- plant lists for specific site conditions
- aquatic plant recommendations suitable for ponds
- advice on managing invasive species
- planting approaches in the face of climate change
- an index of plants native to the Maryland Piedmont
- planting strategies from nature writer Nancy Lawson
- tips for dealing with deer (including deer-resistant plants)



You can download a copy of the Maryland Native Plant Guide Piedmont Region for free at <https://umd.app.box.com/s/wor658gif8nm79jd7gc0i8m89fbpvojz> or purchase a hard copy for \$10 plus shipping & handling through the Maryland Native Plant Society at <https://mdflora.org/online-store>. The Guide may also be available at select Master Gardener events. Guides for the Coastal Plain and Mountain regions are planned for 2026 and 2027, respectively.

- **Contributed by Master Naturalist, Deb Portney**

## **Volunteer Appreciation and Master Naturalist Celebration Event – New Date & Location!**



On Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026 from 6:30 to 8:30pm in the Catoctin Creek Nature Center, the Frederick County Nature Council will celebrate all of the dedicated volunteers who support Catoctin Creek and Fountain Rock Parks and Nature Centers and announce the 2025 Volunteer of the Year. Additionally, we will certify each member of the Class of Fall 2024 as an official Maryland Master Naturalist based upon their completion of their volunteer hours and advanced training. In addition, we welcome the Master Naturalist Class of Fall 2025 interns as they embark on their next stage toward certification. Join us for a casual evening of nature trivia with exciting prizes, delicious refreshments, and fun with folks who enjoy the same things you do!

## **Mobilize Frederick Climate Summit**

The fourth annual Climate Summit will be held at Hood College on February 27-28, 2026. The theme is local solutions to global challenges. Keynote speakers include Matt Scott, Director of Storytelling and Engagement, Project Drawdown, Dr. Daniel Kammen, Bloomberg Distinguished Professor of Energy and Climate Justice at Johns Hopkins University, and Dr. Sacoby Wilson, Professor with the Department of Global, Environmental, and Occupational Health and Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics in the University of Maryland, College Park School of Public Health. Numerous panels and workshops are planned throughout the two days, including a workshop by Master Naturalists Carey Murphy and Jenny Woodall on the iNaturalist app in preparation for the City Nature Challenge! Daily schedules and information on the sessions being offered are available on the Mobilize Frederick website. ([www.mobilizefrederick.org/2026-summit-overview](http://www.mobilizefrederick.org/2026-summit-overview)) Registration is now open at the Mobilize Frederick website for one or both days. Join us for this great event and come away with new information, understanding, and inspiration!

## **Logging Volunteer Hours – Why It is Important**



Keeping track of the many hours we spend on various tasks throughout the year in support of Master Naturalist programs can seem somewhat daunting, and logging those hours at year end can even be overwhelming. Sometimes it's easy to ask "why bother?" or say "I'll just skip this year." The fact is that reporting our volunteer hours is extremely important in demonstrating the positive impact the Master Naturalist program has across the state of Maryland, and particularly in Frederick County. Organizations who sponsor Maryland Master Naturalist courses anticipate a return on their investment at the end of each course in the form of annual volunteer hours that help with park programming, stewardship, and outreach. When volunteers track and report those hours, the facilitators have documentation of all the excellent work that Master Naturalists are contributing, which in turn demonstrates the effectiveness of the program. With the convenience of the online system for reporting hours, we can readily retrieve records for this purpose. Thanks for logging!

## Spring Native Plant Sales and the Maryland Native Plant Society



While the Fountain Rock Native Plant Sale is a huge fundraising event for us each fall, there are several organizations that sponsor Spring native plant sales, if you happen to be in the market for them this season. Muddy Branch Alliance, a watershed organization within Montgomery County, hosts a Spring sale where orders are placed online and plants are available to be collected on a predetermined “pick-up” date. To request details, you can sign up at <https://muddy-branch-alliance.square.site>. The 2026 sale opens March 15<sup>th</sup> with the pick-up date Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup>. Additionally, the Friends of Black Hill Nature Programs will be sponsoring an in-person native plant sale at the Black Hill Discovery Center in Boyds, MD, on May 2-3, 2026. Details can be found at: <https://www.friendsofblackhillnature.org/native-plant-sale>. For further information on native plant sales across the state as well as excellent online monthly programming, consider joining the Maryland Native Plant Society ([www.mdflora.org](http://www.mdflora.org)). Happy planting!

## Biodiversity - City Nature Challenge 2026

This is a great excuse to get outside and into nature and document your observations using the iNaturalist app ([www.iNaturalist.org](http://www.iNaturalist.org)) while simultaneously collecting citizen science data on biodiversity throughout Frederick County. Last year Team Frederick, coordinated by Mobilize Frederick and team members from various organizations throughout the county, participated in the global City Nature Challenge and helped launch the Washington DC Metro Area into 5<sup>th</sup> place overall worldwide for participation! The team is psyched for the 2026 event scheduled for April 24-27 and hopes to beat the incredible numbers of participants/observers, observations, species observed, research grade level species, and identifications obtained in 2025. Events are being planned throughout Frederick County which participants can join, or, if you so desire, you can become an event planner/coordinator and lead a group of community members in the data collection effort at a location you determine. Details and resources may be found at <https://www.mobilizefrederick.org/city-nature-challenge>.



## Book Club

Six ladies met in January at the Common Market on Rt. 85 for a lively discussion of our second book on wolves, *American Wolf* by Nate Blakeslee. Many thanks to Ann for facilitating the interesting discussion about a most controversial topic of wolf reintroduction and management, and two different authors' perspectives. Also, thanks for members sharing good CM snacks Our schedule for the first half of 2026 is as follows:

March 16 @ CCNC: **Is a River Alive?** by Robert MacFarland

April 20 @ CCNC: social gathering

May 11 @ CCNC: ***The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World***, by Andrea Wulf

June (TBD) @ CCNC: social gathering

July (TBD) @ CCNC: ***Grizzly Confidential: An Astounding Journey into the Secret Life of North America's Most Fearsome Predator***, by Kevin Grange

Interested? Please contact Lynne Marquess at [lynne@marq3.net](mailto:lynne@marq3.net).

## Nature Council Update



**Our Mission:** To provide support and advocacy for the Fountain Rock and Catoctin Creek Parks through Stewardship, Volunteerism, Membership and Fundraising Opportunities.

The next meeting will be held on Monday, February 16<sup>th</sup> from 7-8 pm via Zoom. As a Recreation Council in Frederick County, all meetings are open to the public. Refer to [naturecouncilfc.org](http://naturecouncilfc.org) for information on how to access the meetings. Please note that we will not be scheduling quarterly Master Naturalist meetings in 2026. Participating in the monthly Frederick County Nature Council meetings is a great way to stay in touch with what is going on at the parks, earn Master Naturalist volunteer hours, learn about upcoming events and training opportunities, help make decisions on how funds are allocated to the nature centers, request support for nature projects you would like to pursue, and stay involved with folks who share your interest in nature and our local nature centers! Please join us!

## Volunteer Opportunities

**Catoctin Creek Nature Center** – March 28<sup>th</sup> will be the **prep day for the Purple Martin Gourds**. It will begin at 10 AM and end once the gourds are prepared and raised. (Most likely 30-60 minutes depending on how many individuals help.) There is no program or event, only the preparation of the gourds for the season. There will be nest checks throughout the summer which take place on Saturdays – more information to come on those.

**Coordinate an outreach table at an upcoming community event** for Maryland Master Naturalists of Frederick County and the Frederick County Nature Council. Materials are available at the Fountain Rock Nature Center.

Assist with or coordinate and host an iNaturalist event for the **City Nature Challenge**.

**Clean Up Days** at Audubon Society of Central Maryland sanctuaries. <https://centralmdaudubon.org/eventscalendar>

**Streamlink Education** – <https://www.streamlinededucation.org/volunteer> - Spring 2026 opportunities to be posted soon

## Upcoming Advanced Training Opportunities and Other Fun Nature Programs

**MAEOE Conference** – Maryland Association of Environmental and Outdoor Educators will host their annual conference at the Sheraton Baltimore North Hotel in Towson, MD February 19-22, 2026. For more information, refer to <https://www.maeoe.org/conference/>

**Frederick County Nature Council Zoom Lectures – No cost!** Webinar Series, “I’m a Naturalist, Not a Meteorologist!” with Randy Bass. **Part 2** Climate Patterns and Change: Understanding the Long View to be held on Thursday, March 5, 2026 at 7:00pm. Register now at [naturecouncilfc.org](http://naturecouncilfc.org).

### **Fountain Rock Nature Center: (recreator.com)**

Weed Warriors, February 27, 2026 and March 27, 2026 from 10am to noon. Free!

St. Patty’s Snakes, Thursday, March 17, 2026 from 6-8pm Course #36291

Art in the Park: Decorative Fire Starters February 27, 2026 from 6-8pm, Course #36267

Nature Paper Making March 27, 2026 from 6-8pm Course #36268

**Wild Ones** - online lectures- <https://greaterfrederickmaryland.wildones.org/events/>

**Central Audubon Society of Maryland** - monthly programs - <https://centralmdaudubon.org/eventscalendar>

## Announcements – Save the Dates and Mark Your Calendars!

Great Backyard Bird Count – February 13-16, 2026, [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org)

February Nature Outing with the Central Audubon Society of Maryland: Saturday, February 21, 2026 from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM at the Fred Archibald Sanctuary located at 6011 Boyers Mill Road, New Market, MD, 21774

Fourth Annual Mobilize Frederick Climate Summit – February 27-28, 2026 at Hood College. Registration is open! Learn more at [www.mobilizefrederick.org/2026-summit-overview](http://www.mobilizefrederick.org/2026-summit-overview)

Cunningham Falls Maple Syrup Festival – 10am -2pm on March 8, 9, 15 & 16 at the William Houck Area within Cunningham Falls State Park – sponsored by the Friends of Cunningham Falls and Gambrill State Parks. Don't miss the pancake breakfast!

**Book Club:** March 16 @ CCNC: **Is a River Alive?** by Robert MacFarland

March Nature Outing with the Central Audubon Society of Maryland: Saturday, March 21, 2026 from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM at the Audrey Carroll Sanctuary located at Old Annapolis Road, Mount Airy, MD

Frederick County Nature Council Volunteer Appreciation Event, Master Naturalist Certificate Presentation to Interns (Class of Fall 2025), and Master Naturalist “Graduation” Celebration (Class of Fall 2024)! March 21, 2026 – 6:30-8:30pm at Catoctin Creek Nature Center - Come take the Barb Kemerer Trivia Challenge! Great prizes and refreshments!

Frederick County Master Gardeners presents Maryland Living Landscapes – Saturday, April 11, 2026 from 10:00am to 12:00noon at the University of Maryland Extension Office. Register on the county website.

Wildlife Habitat Advisors Course – Thursday April 16, 2026 at Fountain Rock Park – full!

City Nature Challenge 2026 – April 24-27, 2026. Interested in participating or hosting an event or assisting with an event? [www.mobilizefrederick.org/city-nature-challenge](http://www.mobilizefrederick.org/city-nature-challenge)

Baker's Park Children's Festival – Saturday, April 25, 2026 sponsored by the Frederick County Mental Health Association – sponsor a community outreach table with a nature theme for kids!

Earth Fest 2026 – late May

Thorpewood – monthly Nature On Tap Speaker Series at RAK Brewing – sign up for the monthly newsletter to be notified at <https://thorpewood.org>

*“No winter lasts forever; no spring skips its turn.”* —Hal Borland



# HELP MAKE EVERY MAY IN MARYLAND NATIVE PLANT AWARENESS MONTH!



HB 0217 SB 0229

**Will you join our effort today?**

Let our legislators in the Maryland General Assembly know you support this zero cost - no mandate initiative to raise public awareness about the importance of using more native plants in our landscapes.

**SCAN THE QR CODE below to learn more and to add your signature to our SIGN ON LETTER OF SUPPORT**



Sponsors: Delegate Dana Stein and Senator Ben Brooks

**Join us in support of the  
Maryland Native Plant Month Bill!**



We'll keep you informed of our progress in the 2026 Maryland General Assembly.  
For more information, please contact Mary Ellen Pease at [mpease@comcast.net](mailto:mpease@comcast.net)

*The next quarterly issue of the Frederick County Master Naturalist and Nature Council newsletter will be issued during the week of March 30, 2026. Please submit any materials you would like to have included by March 27<sup>th</sup>. Errors, corrections, omissions? Contact Dana Collingwood ([dana.collingwood@gmail.com](mailto:dana.collingwood@gmail.com))*