



REScapades

Stories and Adventures from Environmental Stewards



Program Updates



Certification Projects Begin as the 2024 Class Concludes

With the conclusion of the 2024 course, 95 new Environmental Stewards are embarking on their volunteer projects, each aimed at tackling pressing environmental issues within their community.



Their projects, which range from habitat restoration and water quality monitoring to educational outreach and public health, will enhance their communities in the face of climate change and qualify Stewards for certification. Their commitment exemplifies the proactive spirit needed to foster environmental protection in New Jersey.



We look forward to seeing the positive impacts of their work and invite everyone to support their progress. You can follow our spotlights [on Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). Together we can make a significant difference in protecting our natural resources. Congratulations once again to our Stewards on this exciting next step!

Ready for Certification?

Now is the time to wrap up your project and submit impact reports, photos, and deliverables. [Here is the link](#) to the impact report, due by August, 31.

Projects will be certified at this year's Impact Summit on October 26th. Save the Date!



New Climate Change Education Requirement For Certification Projects

Climate change in New Jersey is having far-reaching impacts on the economy, the environment, and the way we conduct our everyday lives. Starting in 2024, new Stewards must incorporate climate change education into their projects. Stewards can choose the best method for providing climate change information to the public based on the issue they are addressing. For example, if working on a habitat conservation project, the Steward could create a brochure or educational signage that details how New Jersey forests are impacted by climate change and the importance of trees for reducing greenhouse gases using information from the **2020 New Jersey Scientific Report on Climate Change**.

Climate change education is optional for those who completed the course prior to 2024. [More information can be found here](#).

Steward Stories



Nancy D'Andrea, President SSPC, Nancy Toro RES volunteer, Dan Hayes, Director SCPC.
Image: Ryan Quick

Nancy Toro RES 2022: Volunteer Award Recipient

Nancy completed the RES course in 2022 and was inspired to use her training to protect the environment in her community. Already familiar with the Environmental Education Center (EEC) in Somerset County, Nancy completed her certification project by improving biodiversity on the property. She began by creating an inventory of invasive Callery pear trees, *Pyrus calleryana* and initiated their replacement with native species.

[Read more of Nancy's story...](#)

Follow the Plants

My Journey from Environmental Steward to Boat Steward - *Ann Cucchiara RES 2020*

It was back in 2019 that I decided to enroll in the Rutgers Environmental Steward Program.

As a recently retired schoolteacher, I wanted to learn more about the negative, as well as positive, impacts humans make on the environment and climate. The weekly seminars offered by the program throughout the spring helped me in my environmental stewardship activities and in converting my own property to a more ecologically diverse and friendly habitat.

The certification project I completed centered on native pollinator plants in our central Jersey region. After visiting several nurseries, parks, and nature preserves, I collated a list of the best plants to attract pollinators and sustain a biodiverse environment. I created a mobile plant unit containing living samples, photos, and information for the public.

[Continue reading Ann's story](#)



Attend, Learn, Do



Continue Learning with Rutgers

Rutgers Cooperative Extension offers training in a wide variety of topic areas, from GIS to Wetlands through the Office of Continuing Professional Education. Although some courses are specifically geared toward those already in the industry, several courses are open to those looking to expand their field of study. For example, how about learning more about geographic information systems (GIS)! Browse a full list of topics below.

[NJAES Continuing Professional Education Topic Areas](#)

RUTGERS New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station
Environmental Stewards

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• 100%ES • JULY INVASIVE SPECIES OF THE MONTH PROJECT

July Invasive Species of the Month: Privet
July 10, 2024 by [Michelle Babcock](#)

Is the "Invasive Species of the Month" useful to you? [Let us know here.](#)

Privet, *Ligustrum* spp.

Privet has white clusters of flowers and opposite leaf arrangement.
Photo credit: Mike Maguire

Privet hedge in the landscape.
Photo credit: Michelle Babcock

Privet produces clusters of blackberry fruit, which are eaten and spread by birds.
Photo credit: Mike Maguire

July Invasive Species of the Month: Privet, *Ligustrum* spp.

Typically used as a property hedge, several privet species have spread into understory forests and roadsides. [Learn to identify this plant, how to manage it, and what to plant instead in this overview.](#)

Sixty Seconds of Stewardship

[Cooperative Extension Bulletin E376](#)

[Beech Leaf Disease & Experimental Management Options](#)

Jean Epiphan, Agriculture & Natural Resources Agent, Morris County

Richard Buckley, Director, Plant Diagnostic Lab and Nematode Detection Service

Timothy Waller, Agriculture & Natural Resources Agent, Cumberland County

Roslyn Dvorin, Outreach Coordinator, Urban Forestry Program

Beech Leaf Disease & Experimental Management Options

Jean Eglsher, Agriculture & Natural Resources Agent, Morris County
 Richard Buckley, Director, Plant Diagnostic Lab and Nematode Detection Service
 Timothy Walker, Agriculture & Natural Resources Agent, Cumberland County
 Raelyn Dixon, Outreach Coordinator, Urban Forestry Program

Quick Facts

- Beech leaf disease (BLD) is a new disease to the United States; scientists have been working quickly to understand its pathogenesis and test treatment options to mitigate or control damage.
- BLD affects beech (*Fagus spp.*) tree species and has not been shown to infect any other genera. This disease poses no direct harm to humans.
- BLD causes rapid decline and mortality of American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) and European beech (*F. sylvatica*); mortality can occur between 2 to 10 years depending on site. BLD has also been reported to impact Oriental beech (*F. orientalis*) and Chinese beech (*F. engleriana*).
- BLD is caused by an invasive nematode *Litylenchus unicornis* subsp. *moosehill* (Lom, Figure 1). A nematode is a microscopic roundworm that cannot be seen with the naked eye.
- BLD is recognized best by opaque banding of diseased leaf tissue (Figure 2).
- Infection occurs in the leaf buds. Lom does not infect woody tissue.
- Primary damage to leaf tissue occurs in the bud stage.
- Highly infested and damaged leaves become thickened, distorted, prematurely shed, and branch dieback ensues. Decline and mortality follow.
- Current treatment options are very new and considered experimental; adverse impacts are not yet known. Treatment options may change and improve in coming years.
- When treatment is not an option, mitigation steps are key to reducing negative environmental impacts from beech losses.



Figure 1. The beech leaf disease-causing nematode *Litylenchus unicornis* subsp. *moosehill* is a leaf-feeding nematode-roundworm. Photo Credit: Sabine Topik, Rutgers Plant Diagnostic Laboratory.



Figure 2. Symptomatic beech leaves affected with beech leaf disease. These photos are taken against the light so as to show the opaque banding of diseased leaf tissue, an indicative symptom of BLD. Photo Credit: Jean Eglsher, Rutgers Cooperative Extension.

The Environmental Stewards Program relies on donations from the community, alumni, and partner organizations to expand the program, keep resources up to date, and provide science-based information to participants well beyond the completion of the course.

Every donation is meaningful no matter how small or large.

The Rutgers Environmental Steward Enrichment Fund helps support scholarships for participants in need, mini-grants to help make certification projects successful, and advanced trainings to keep Stewards informed of the latest environmental issues.

All Donations Help Make a Big Impact

Visit the RES Website



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