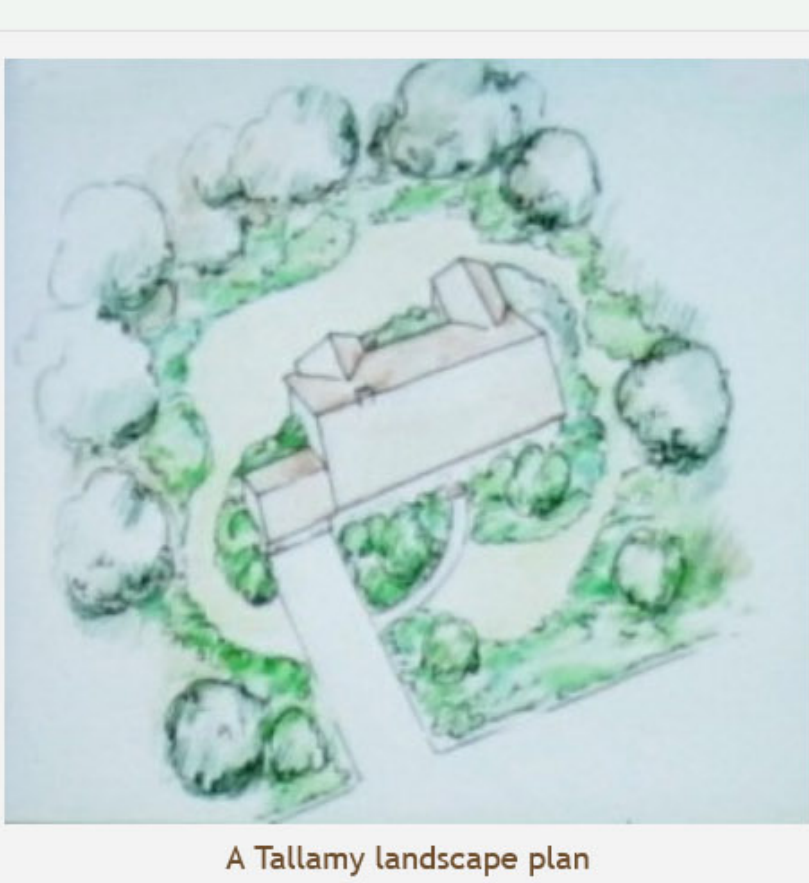
Doug Tallamy!

By Ginny Stibolt 20 Comments

The hero of native plant enthusiasts everywhere, Doug Tallamy has made the case for using native plants in every landscape, no matter how small, in his iconic 2007 book *Bringing Nature Home*. He says that planting natives in small landscapes will not recreate ancient ecosystems, but it does create biodiversity to support what's left of our wildlife.

Doug Tallamy was a keynote speaker at this year's Florida Native Plant Society's annual conference in May. He packed the hall and received a standing ovation at the end of his presentation. I think the ovation was well deserved, not only because of his great presentation, but also because of his commitment to the cause. He has provided us (native plant enthusiasts) with easy-to-understand talking points on why using natives in the landscapes is important.

Ecosystem Services



A Tallamy landscape plan

Studies have shown that even a modest increase in natives plant cover on suburban properties significantly increases the number and species of breeding birds. Doug Tallamy suggests that we should think of our yards as opportunistic sites for performing ecosystem services, and that we reverse the "normal" landscaping so that turf is only in place where we walk or use the lawn for recreation. The rest of the landscape would consist of bunching grasses, shrubs, understory trees and canopy trees.

Armed with Tallamy's talking points, we can more easily make a good case for native plants out in the general public and maybe even sway formerly hostile audiences. So…

Are you an activist for native plants?

Do you promote pesticide free landscapes with high biodiversity? Have you been including more natives in your own landscape or helped plant them in your neighborhood? Do you object when retailers sell invasive plants? Have you helped remove invasives from public or private lands as part of a workgroup? If you answered, "Not yet," now is the time to get started because time is not on our side as more of our native habitats disappear under the bulldozer, plow, or the hooves of farm-owned stock. Our native birds have been declining rapidly since the 1960s, including some species that have declined more than 80%.

Spread the word to gardeners and other groups.

In addition to planting more natives in our yards and neighborhoods, we can spread the word about why natives are important and how to find native plants. I'm one of the bloggers and Facebook page managers for the Florida Native Plant Society (FNPS) and as part of this effort we publish blog posts on Florida natives. When we post photos of natives on the Facebook page, one of the most asked comments is "Where can I purchase this beautiful plant?" Our answer is always the same: we link to the Florida Association of Native Nurseries page on that plant with a list of members who have it in stock. The second most asked question is, "Will that plant grow where I live?" We provide the link to the Florida Plant Atlas for that plant with its verified distribution map.

Where to Start?

A good place to start is your local native plant society chapter. While each state organization and each chapter is unique, the mission revolves around learning about native plants, teaching others about them, and making natives available. I've written about the Florida Native Plant Society before in this blog.

Join the local chapter of your native plant society, if you want to learn about natives and meet other like-minded individuals. And if your native plant society isn't all that active, now is the time to help it become better by leading a field trip, starting a chapter, helping with the website, or by volunteering to do something else useful.

I thought I'd share some photos for this year's FNPS conference, which took place in May in Plant City-near Tampa.

Enhancing Habitat for Native Insect Pollinators
Jaret C. Daniels, Ph.D.
UF FLORIDA

In addition to Tallamy, there were more than 30 speakers including entomologist Jaret Daniels who talked about his work with Florida farmers. http://fnpsblog.blogspot.com/2012/05/jaret-daniels-and-his-charismatic.html

Native plant vendors brought lots of plants for us and many people went home with full cars.

A wide variety of inside vendors provided additional education.

Plant ID contests (beginner and advanced) and plant jeopardy were fun. The silent auction was quite competitive, and raised more than $2000.

From learning more details about a plant to choosing images, there was plenty to keep everyone busy.

One evening social took place at Gigi's Garden.

Saturday Social was held at beautiful Crystal Springs. Dinner was in a screened cabana in the woods. A sandhill crane tends her eggs on a sandbank on one of the outflows from the springs.

All in all, it was a great conference this year, but the next one will be even better since it will be in Jacksonville, and my chapter is already hard at work planning it. Y'all come on down!

Y'all come on down to Jacksonville next May.

Resources:

For more information see Tallamy's website

Florida Native Plant Society website and the FNPS blog

One more reason to plant native plants: Cedar Waxwings killed by non-native Brazilian pepper berries

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Filed Under: Native Plants Tagged With: Bringing Nature Home, Doug Tallamy, Florida Native Plant Society

About Ginny Stibolt

Ginny Stibolt, a naturalist with a master's degree in botany, lives in Green Cove Springs in northern Florida. She's written a book, *Sustainable Gardening for Florida* published by University Press of Florida. Her website, Green Gardening Matters contains a six-year log of Florida gardening, nearly 100 articles, and links to more than 100 podcasts about gardening in Florida. She's an active member of the Florida Native Plant Society and is one of the primary FNPS bloggers. She is also an active member of the Lawn Reform Coalition.

Comments

Rambling Woods says:
June 4, 2012 at 1:14 pm

It was his book that started me on my journey with native plants and I had never gardened before..Michelle

Rambling Woods recently posted..World Bird..New Mallard Duck Brood Appears on The Pond

REPLY

Ginny Stibolt says:
June 4, 2012 at 4:26 pm

Hi Michelle, I think that the compelling nature of Tallamy's message expressed in everyday language has persuaded a lot of people, like yourself, who said, "If not me, then who; and if not now, when?"
Thanks for sharing.

REPLY

Donna@Gardens Eye View says:
June 5, 2012 at 5:58 am

Ginny I discovered Doug after I started using natives a bit…every year I add more and more. I have joined a local group and I hope to become more involved and visit more local nurseries now. Hoping we have a wonderful event such as yours up here that I can actually get time off of work to attend.

REPLY

Ginny Stibolt says:
June 5, 2012 at 9:40 am

Our conferences are held on Friday and Saturday, with Saturday being the most attended day. Field trips are on Thursday and Sunday. This way people with 9 to 5 jobs can take part in both the meetings and the field trips.

Yes the best way to have a better group is to become more involved. Let us know how your local group is coming along.

REPLY

Sue Dingwell says:
June 5, 2012 at 8:52 am

Ginny, Sounds like that conference really rocked; and I know for sure that next years' will, too, with your chapter at the helm! I had missed the news about the cedar waxwings, thanks for including that. I sometimes hear people coo about how the waxwings love that plant. But once again we see how the imbalance created by invasives works against the local ecosystems that sustain our wildlife. The peppers in wild areas are frequently present in huge numbers, they outcompete everything and form a dense monoculture. Native berries are rarely present in such masses that the birds can overfeed.

Sue Dingwell recently posted..Clean Green Kids

REPLY

Ginny Stibolt says:
June 5, 2012 at 9:45 am

Yes, Sue, this year's conference was great. You were missed!

Yes, Brazilian peppers are awful on so many levels. They have even advanced up here in northeastern Florida. We're hoping to beat it back so it goes no farther.

REPLY

Beatriz Moisset says:
June 5, 2012 at 9:21 am

I have been concerned about the issue of human-introduced species for a long time to the point of maintaining a list of non-native arthropods in North America (http://bugguide.net/node/view/32329). I have read several books on the subject (Nature out of Place, A Plague of Rats and Rubber-vines, Out of Eden). They are excellent books but it was Doug Tallamy's "Bringing Nature Home" that gave me an entirely new perspective and focus. He is truly a pioneer and his ideas are supported by the research work that he and his team continue to accumulate.

Beatriz Moisset recently posted..Gardening for Honorary Butterflies (Mint Moths)

REPLY

Ginny Stibolt says:
June 5, 2012 at 9:48 am

Beatriz, you're right about Tallamy's focus. Hopefully we'll be able to wake up even more people.Thanks.

REPLY

Marc Imlay says:
June 5, 2012 at 10:47 am

He says that planting natives in small landscapes will not recreate ancient ecosystems,

The exception is some homeowners have land contiguous with a high quality natural area which still has a relatively ancient ecosystem, especially where invasive species are removed by the local park agency and volunteers. After homeowners remove invasive species from their land and plant natives, more native species move in from the contiguous natural area.

REPLY

Carole Sevilla Brown says:
June 5, 2012 at 11:38 am

I was very blessed while I was in grad school that Doug Tallamy graciously agreed to serve as my thesis advisor. What a lovely and generous man! He helped guide me to what has now become my website Ecosystem Gardening, and also led to the development of this team. His book should be required reading for every homeowner, landscaper, garden center owner, even businesses, schools, and churches! The earth would be well on it's way to healing itself if all of us read this book and applied his principles in our own spaces.

Carole Sevilla Brown recently posted..Starting From Scratch In the Wildlife Garden

REPLY

Mindy Lighthipe says:
June 5, 2012 at 10:17 pm

I just moved from New Jersey to Florida and am thrilled with the Florida Native Plant Society!!!! I wanted to go to the conference this year but was unable. Hopefully next year. Thanks for writing such a great blog post.

Mindy Lighthipe recently posted..Butterfly Metamorphosis

REPLY

Ginny Stibolt says:
June 6, 2012 at 8:24 am

Hi Mindy, I'm happy you found FNPS. Hope to see you next year!

REPLY

Carol Duke says:
June 6, 2012 at 8:12 am

I am lucky to live near the New England Wild Flower's Society's farm Nasami . . a great resource for Western Massachusetts and surrounding areas. Your conference looks wonderful and I love the botanical collections and paintings. Great Article Ginny!

Carol Duke recently posted..Herbaceous Peonies Throughout the Gardens

REPLY

Ginny Stibolt says:
June 6, 2012 at 8:23 am

Thanks Carol. I love western Mass: went to UMass, Amherst and did a lot of exploring around the area.

REPLY

Loret says:
June 9, 2012 at 8:53 pm

I-all will have to come up to Jacksonville 🙂

Loret recently posted..Condo living for bluebirds?

REPLY

Ellen Sousa says:
June 15, 2012 at 10:46 am

Doug has made many people think about their properties in an entirely new light! I tout his book everywhere I go. I was always into native plants but his teachings convinced me that anything new I add to my garden from hereon is going to be almost 100% native to this region. We need to protect our remaining biodiversity everywhere and anyway we can…

Ellen Sousa recently posted..Groundcovers for Moist Shade

REPLY

Trackbacks

Starting a Wildlife Garden From Scratch says:
June 12, 2012 at 1:48 pm

[…] simple google search will provide you with contact information for your local native plant society. Joining this organization and participating in field trips, workshops, and other events will […]

REPLY

Attracting Damsels & Dragons says:
October 4, 2012 at 7:36 am

[…] squarestem: A bee and butterfly magnet Maypop, a native butterfly & bee magnet Doug Tallamy! An Inch-by-Inch Decoration Feat One Native Plant = Three Habitat Benefits Cheer for the Predators […]

REPLY

Advice For My Beginning Native Plant And Wildlife Gardener Self says:
November 28, 2012 at 3:48 pm

[…] in our gardens, I remember feeling a bit overwhelmed. I'd just read Bringing Nature Home by Douglas Tallamy for the first time. No longer was my garden simply a collection of beautiful plants. Suddenly, I […]

REPLY

Tips from Tallamy on Curb Appeal says:
December 12, 2012 at 7:53 pm

[…] Dr. Tallamy's talks are always upbeat: there are a thousand solutions for any problem, he says, and we can preserve our natural plant communities if we choose to. He had, indeed, many more solutions to share. However, seems likely that many readers today are still battling the effects of pie-overload, hence desiring, needing, or being urged to, go on a walk, therefore here are just a few more ideas to take along: […]

REPLY

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Can Gardeners Really Make a Difference for a Healthy Planet?

> Now, for the first time in its history, gardening has taken on a role that transcends the needs of the gardener.
>
> Like it or not, gardeners have become important players in the management of our nation's wildlife. It is now within the power of individual gardeners to do something that we all dream of doing: to "make a difference." ~Douglas Tallamy, Bringing Nature Home

Yes!

We have come together from all over North America, book authors, professors, writers, landscape designers, biologists, gardeners, photographers, and more to say:

"Yes, We Can!"

…Read More

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