



STRATEGIC PLAN 2008-2012

“The goal of life is living in agreement with nature.”

Zeno (335 BC - 264 BC),

Prepared by:
MAEscapes Partnership Advisory Board
Connie Schmotzer, Chairperson

April 16, 2008

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is to acknowledge those MAEscapes Advisory Board members who committed their time voluntarily to participate in the Strategic Planning retreat exercises of January 25, 2008. Those members are Judy Bono, Jim Hitz, Mary Kline, Robin Reid, Connie Schmotzer, and Dave Taylor. We gratefully appreciate the generosity of Judy Bono for hosting the retreat in her home, a beautiful Mid-Atlantic woodland setting that inspired us all.

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Executive Summary

The Mid-Atlantic Ecological Landscapes project is a strategic public-private partnership of individuals, agencies, organizations, and other stakeholder groups committed to educating the public about making the wisest choices “**to use native plant materials to demonstrate conservation landscaping for educational purposes.**”

Founded in 2003, the MAEscapes Partnership is a citizen-volunteer based 12 member Advisory Board who meet on a regular basis to provide leadership and a framework to ensure the group's goals are achieved.

MAEscapes is based at the York County ANNEX, at 118 Pleasant Acres Road, York, Pennsylvania. There visitors will find and may enjoy a variety of MAEscapes landscapes demonstrating the guiding principles of using native plants, conserving water, integrated pest management, and beneficial habitat for wildlife.

Since 2003, MAEscapes' programs have grown and developed into a cadre of products and services, including:

- Bringing people and organizations together to share resources and talents to effectively and
- efficiently conserve Mid-Atlantic ecological landscapes, native Plants and their communities.
- Provide opportunities for people to enjoy understand and value native plants and plant communities.
- Ensure conservation and preservation of York County's native plants and natural plant communities through ecological landscape management.
- Encourage the wholesale and retail communities to develop local markets in support of native plant conservation.
- Encourage practices that support appropriate and sustainable uses of beneficial native
- plants.
- Promote the development and use of coordinated databases and information-sharing to support native plant conservation.

MAEscapes is funded by donations, fee based programs, fundraising, grants, and in-kind contributions of the York County Master Gardeners whose volunteers give many hours of their time to help establish and maintain these unique demonstration landscapes in order to increase the public's awareness and knowledge of the importance of conserving native plants and their communities, in York County and beyond.

Authorization

This page includes all of the necessary signatures from the advisory board of directors and other top management designating that they approve the contents of, and support implementation of, the plan.

Name & Affiliation

- Tina Alban Forester, Pennsylvania Dept. of Conservation & Natural Resources
- Judy Bono, Owner, The Gardener of the Owl Valley
- Lauri Danko Owner, GardenScape Design & Consulting
- Jackie Doyle Owner/Operator, Doyle Farm Nursery
- Tim Falkenstein, Penn State Master Gardener
- Jim Hitz Penn State Master Gardener
- Joy Howell Environmental Educator. Joys of Nature
- Mary Kline Registered Landscape Architect, Mary C. Kline, RLA
- Sue Myers
- Christopher Paules Professional Gardener
- Gary Peacock, Watershed Specialist, York County Conservation District
- Robin Reid, Penn State Master Gardener
- Connie Schmotzer Extension Educator, Penn State Cooperative Extension – York
- Tom Smith Penn State Master Gardener
- Sharon Swope Penn State Master Gardener
- Mark Willoughby Owner/Operator, The Garden's Edge

Approved by the Advisory Board November 6, 2008

History & Background

This section describes the beginnings and history of the MAEscapes Partnership, its major products and services, highlights and accomplishments during the history of organization, etc.

The MAEscapes Partnership began with a casual conversation about native plants between Connie Schmotzer, Horticulture Specialist, Penn State Cooperative Extension Service, and Gary R. Peacock, Watershed Specialist, York County Conservation District. Both agreed that it would be wonderful to bring together like-minded individuals and organizations interested and committed to being innovative leaders educating the public about the importance of conserving and preserving our native plants and promoting their uses at home, work and play.

In October of 2003, a meeting was held at the York County ANNEX and a group of about a dozen individuals and organizations were invited to discuss native plant concerns and issues and determine if there was any interest and support of forming a partnership to promote native plants. Three subsequent meeting of this informal group resulted in the creation of the "Mid-Atlantic Ecological Landscapes (MAEscapes) partnership, organization of the advisory board, and planning of the ANNEX demonstration site. York County's Master Gardeners became a vital partner in establishing and maintaining the demonstration site.

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- Promote the development and use of coordinated databases and information-sharing to support native plant conservation.

Major MAEscapes accomplishments from 2003 to 2007 include design and construction of the ANNEX demonstration site including Entrance, Rainwater Conservation, Prairie, Edge, and Slope gardens for public education and outreach, ANNEX demonstration garden's interpretive signage creation and installation, Master Gardener advisors training, public educational classes and workshops, spring and fall native plant sales, the "Bring Back the Natives" tour of private York County native plant landscapes, field trips to the Stroud Water Research Center and Hershey School gardens, development of a MAEscapes Project at the Phineas Davis Elementary School in the City of York, and participation in the Watershed Alliance of York's Watershed Weekend, annually.

Mission, Vision & Values

These statements describe the strategic "philosophy" of the organization.

Mission

Conserving the biodiversity and health of native plants and ecosystems is essential to sustain the natural resource base upon which we depend for survival. There is an urgent need to develop effective plant conservation programs before more species and communities become critically endangered. Native plant conservation strategies are not only needed to protect the most imperiled species, but to ensure the long-term survival of all native plant species and plant communities.

Organizations and individuals interested in native plant conservation need to pool resources and combine energies to develop innovative approaches to ensure the continued existence of our plant resources. Most current plant conservation efforts lack focus and are fragmented among government agencies, conservation groups, botanical gardens, academia, and private individuals.

Therefore, MAEscapes **mission** is:

"To use native plant materials to demonstrate conservation landscaping for educational purposes." (10/1/03)

Vision

The Mid-Atlantic Ecological Landscapes Partnership provides a framework and strategy for linking resources and expertise in developing a coordinated regional approach to plant conservation. The strategy is guided by the following **vision**:

Educating the public about the importance of restoring and preserving Mid-Atlantic ecological landscapes, native plants and their communities by demonstrating landscaping principles, processes and practices that are beneficial, responsible and sustainable.

This strategy is intended to be an evolving one that motivates thinking and catalyzes action toward plant conservation. Initially, six broad strategies and supporting goals and actions have been identified to launch the initiative, and suggested actions and opportunities have been identified to guide efforts for implementing the regional strategy. Different priorities will guide implementation at regional, and local levels.

Values

Why protect native plants? A spectacular array of native plants grace the landscapes of our County. Together, these plants form diverse communities and ecosystems that directly support our economic prosperity and quality of life. No matter how small, all plants play a valuable role in our lives:

- ***Ecological Values: Native plants convert the sun's energy into food; thus they are the source of all food to the animal kingdom. Plants cycle and clean fresh water upon which terrestrial animals depend, and ensure soil stability for ecosystems. We depend on plants to provide the oxygen that all living organisms require.***

- ***Economic Values: Plants are sources of genetic and raw materials that are used to expand or diversify agricultural and industrial products, including foods and medicine. Native plants provide a storehouse of genetic diversity for future exploration, discovery, and use, to meet human needs.***
- ***Societal Values: The beauty of wildflowers is just one of the many aesthetic values of native plants. The presence of plants in their native habitats and in cultivation enhances our world in many ways. Native plant communities and natural areas provide opportunities for people to experience nature.***

Pennsylvania's ecosystems are home to an estimated 2,000 native plant species. These native plants are found in a wide range of environments from forests, wetlands, and grasslands. Conservation of native plants in many of these habitats is threatened by a complex array of factors associated with human population growth and development. Mirroring world-wide trends in declining diversity, native plants are being lost at an alarming rate. According to scientists in the United States, more than 200 plants have become extinct since the early 1800's and nearly 5,000 native species are "at risk." Yet only 526 of these plant species have been offered protection under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

Many plant species remain unknown to us and new plant species continue to be discovered. It is important that we attempt to maintain the full complement of biological diversity. Ecological research has yielded only limited understanding on the complexities of our ecosystems. Each plant, each component, is essential to maintaining ecosystem integrity. It is impossible to know the full ramifications of the loss of one or more species in this intricate biological web of life.

Goals & Strategies

This section identifies the problem and lists all of the major strategic goals and associated strategies identified during the strategic planning process.

Problem

Plant diversity is a universal resource upon which we depend for survival. However, the limited resources available for plant conservation are not being efficiently utilized. Plant conservation efforts are inconsistent, underfunded, and scattered.

Most people do not appreciate and understand how important native plant diversity is to sustaining our world, health, and lifestyles. In addition, many people have not had opportunities to learn about native plants and to enjoy the beauty of wildflowers. Until more people are educated and interested in native plants and their conservation, the constituency necessary to promote programs and conservation actions is lacking.

The Center for Plant Conservation estimates that 200 plant species have gone extinct in the United States since the early 1800's, and nearly 5,000 native plants are "at risk." Current human population growth and associated development have greatly accelerated degradation of native plants and natural ecosystems. Native plant inventories, monitoring protocols, and management practices are, in many cases, inconsistent and inefficient.

Our understanding of most native plants and communities is limited by the lack of applicable ecological research and supporting technology development. Basic information required for effective planning, protection, and management is limited or nonexistent for many plant species. Many plant scientists are not engaged in or rewarded for conservation work.

Demand for botanical products such as medicinals, herbals, florals, landscaping plants, and food is growing rapidly. Land management agencies are actively promoting development of non-traditional economic uses including these botanical products. Unfortunately, limited ecological information exists for these species, hindering development of appropriate management guidelines.

Numerous plant databases exist and continue to be developed independently. The lack of common data structures, coordination, and awareness of existing databases has hindered information-sharing and results in duplication of effort.

STRATEGY A: BRING PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS TOGETHER TO SHARE RESOURCES AND TALENTS TO EFFECTIVELY CONSERVE THE MID-ATLANTIC REGION'S NATIVE PLANTS.

Goals

- A.1. Expand MAEscapes Partnership's diversity.
- A.2. Build Advisory Board's leadership and capacity.
- A.3. Maintain existing partnerships with the County, Cooperative Extension and Conservation District

STRATEGY B: PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE TO ENJOY, UNDERSTAND, AND VALUE NATIVE PLANTS AND PLANT COMMUNITIES.

Goals

- B.1. Promote demonstration site public educational program.
- B.2. Provide public education and outreach programs, products and services.
- B.3. Build a sustainable volunteer capacity.
- B.4. Promote Bring Back the Natives Garden Tour.
- B.5. Promote Watershed Weekend Demonstration Garden Open House.
- B.6. Provide Phineus Davis Elementary School educational program.

STRATEGY C: ENSURE CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF NATIVE PLANTS AND NATURAL PLANT COMMUNITIES THROUGH ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT.

Goals

- C.1. Provide Master Gardener Advisors training and mentoring.
- C.2. Provide Master Gardener Advisors opportunities for homeowner education, outreach and technical assistance.
- C.3. Promote Homeowner Yard Certification program.

STRATEGY D: ENCOURAGE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT IN SUPPORT OF NATIVE PLANT CONSERVATION.

Goals

- D.1. Develop and maintain ANNEX demonstration gardens for educational purposes.
- D.2. Experiment, monitor, evaluate MAEscapes principles, processes, and practices

STRATEGY E: ENCOURAGE PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT APPROPRIATE AND SUSTAINABLE USES OF BENEFICIAL PLANTS.

Goals

- E.1. Promote spring and fall native plant sale fundraisers.
- E.2. Encourage local wholesale and retail native plant markets.

STRATEGY F: PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF COORDINATED DATABASES AND INFORMATION-SHARING TO SUPPORT NATIVE PLANT CONSERVATION.

Goals

- F.1. Establish and maintain an Internet web presence.
- F.2. Promote MAEscapes native plant database.
- F.3. Share MAEscapes model for duplication and transferability.

Action Planning

STRATEGY/GOALS	OBJECTIVES	COMMITTEE	TIMELINE
STRATEGY A: BRING PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS TOGETHER TO SHARE RESOURCES AND TALENTS TO EFFECTIVELY CONSERVE THE MID-ATLANTIC REGION'S NATIVE PLANTS.			
1.	Create and maintain a list of potential strategic partners and board members, annually.	Co-Chair	2008-2012
2.	Establish strategic alliances with key partnering agencies, organizations and individuals in a written Memorandum of Understanding, in perpetuity.	Chair	2008-2012
3.	Build Advisory Board capacity by recruiting and maintaining a minimum of 12 partner-members, as needed.	Board	2008-2012
4.	Build Advisory Board leadership by sharing chairperson and co-chairperson roles and responsibilities, annually.	Board	2008-2012
5.	Provide the County Commissioners, Cooperative Extension and Conservation District Boards with annual reports of accomplishments and challenges.	Chair	2008-2012
STRATEGY B: PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE TO ENJOY, UNDERSTAND, AND VALUE NATIVE PLANTS AND PLANT COMMUNITIES.			
1.	Complete and install demonstration site's primary, secondary and tertiary educational interpretive signage.	Education	2008
2.	Develop and deliver 4 demonstration garden public educational tours, annually and seasonally.	Education	2008-2012
3.	Develop and deliver 12 MAEscapes public educational classes, biennially.	Education	2009 & 2011
4.	Develop and distribute public outreach products, including MAEscapes plant lists, sources, fact sheets, etc., annually.	Education	2008-2012
5.	Recruit 10 new volunteers, annually .	Education	2008-2012
6.	Grow spring and fall plant sale's to 5:1 return on investment (ROI), annually.	Education	2008-2012
7.	Grow Bring Back the Natives Garden Tour to a minimum of 12 sites and 120 visitors, annually.	Education	2008-2012
8.	Continue sponsoring Watershed Weekend Demonstration Garden Open House and Native Plant Sale, annually.	Education	2008-2012
9.	Develop and deliver Phineus Davis Elementary School educational program to 300 students, in 2008-2009 school year.	Education	2008-2009
STRATEGY C: ENSURE CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF NATIVE PLANTS AND NATURAL PLANT COMMUNITIES THROUGH ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT.			
1.	Provide Master Gardener Advisors training and mentoring, biennially.	Outreach	2009 & 2011
2.	Provide Master Gardener Advisors opportunities for homeowner education, outreach and technical assistance, as requested.	Outreach	2008-2012
3.	Promote Homeowner Yard Certification program, as time and resources allow.	Outreach	2010

MAEscapes Partnership's Strategic Plan

STRATEGY D: ENCOURAGE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT IN SUPPORT OF NATIVE PLANT CONSERVATION.		
1. Monitor demonstration gardens and study native plant selection, water use, pest resistance, and habitat enhancement, annually.	Applied Research	2008-2012
2. Apply appropriate technology (i.e., low input, low tech) to site preparation, planting and maintenance, annually.	Applied Research	2008-2012
3. Report scientific research and technology development to public, annually.	Applied Research	2008-2012
STRATEGY E: ENCOURAGE PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT APPROPRIATE AND SUSTAINABLE USES OF NATIVE PLANTS.		
1. Approach one local municipal or county agency and encourage them to adopt facilities management practices that support appropriate and sustainable uses of native plants, annually.	Outreach	2008-2012
2. Approach one local school or district and encourage them to adopt facilities management practices that support appropriate and sustainable uses of native plants, annually.	Outreach	2008-2012
3. Approach one local plant wholesale or retail operation and encourage them to grow and sell MAEscapes native plants, annually.	Outreach	2008-2012
STRATEGY F: PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF COORDINATED DATABASES AND INFORMATION-SHARING TO SUPPORT NATIVE PLANT CONSERVATION.		
1. Establish an Internet web site for the purposes of being a Mid-Atlantic native plant communications center and information clearinghouse and maintain it, monthly.	Promotion	2008-2012
2. Promote MAEscapes native plant database.	Promotion	2008-2012
3. Study feasibility of duplicating and transferring the MAEscapes model to other interested partners, regionally.	Promotion	2009