



Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter October 2023



Photo by Xavier Courouble

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LITTER/STEWARDS

Sweep the Creek Results: Plastic Beverage Containers Top the Heap

Tropical storm Ophelia interfered with the Sweep the Creek event on Sept 23/24, but could not stop us for long. **Thank you very much to everyone** who rearranged their weekend plans to Sweep the Creek on Sept 30/Oct 1.

Everyone who spent time sweeping played an important role reducing the risk to wildlife of plastic pollution - from plastic

netting to plastic bottles, plastic bags and hard plastic such as buckets, jugs (think Clorox and other cleaners), and items like discarded gadgets and home goods like laundry baskets and storage bins.



Human Thirst for Plastic

Though we counted, sorted and weighed bottles and cans at just two sites this Sweep, we reviewed observations from the other site leaders and can say with confidence that plastic water, juice and soda bottles are by far the most prevalent form of trash creek-wide. Our estimate is that over 1,000 plastic bottles were collected at this sweep. Recyclable when clean, they must be trashed when dirty. Beer cans and glass bottles are also common, left in place like a claim, a mark of "I was here".

Plastic is petroleum based. As it breaks down, it releases PFAS and other contaminants into the soil and water. It's a hazard to wildlife in our creeks (where it can get tangled in bills, paws, and fins) and on into the Anacostia, the Bay and beyond.

Thirst is a fact of life. Yet it seems to be one that people don't anticipate. Refillable water bottles aren't new. Nor do people seem to know the huge negative consequences of using plastic and leaving it in the street or park, or tossing it into the Creek. We must work harder to educate our residents about the impact of plastic waste.

Trends

We noticed that there is less trash overall at many Sweep sites, thanks to dedicated ploggers (people who picking up litter while out jogging or walking.) Thank you to all who pick up litter as they encounter it. You **are** making a difference!

More concentrated littering and trash dumping is continuing at other sites.

Our current list of hot spots includes:

- Wheaton Branch Stormwater Ponds
- Long Branch around Piney Branch Recreation Center
- Long Branch at Garland Park
- Sligo Mill Neighborhood Conservation Area
- Sligo at East/West Highway

FOSC has been partnering with the Parks Dept to organize targeted sweeps in some of these areas and will continue to do so this fall and winter. Check for events on the [Calendar of Events page](#) and the [Litter page](#) of the FOSC website.

Please email litter@fosc.org if you or your group want to do a plastic pickup or mini sweep in one of these areas or in another area that you know needs attention. We want to support you, and coordinate our collective efforts for best use of our human resources.

-- Ed Murtagh, Sweep Coordinator and Vice President of FOSC

FOSC NATIVE PLANT SALE

Going on Now through Oct 26 at 11:59pm

Beautify your garden, building grounds, or your sidewalk "hellstrip" with plants from the FOSC Native Plant Sale

This Fall, FOSC is making it easy to add a variety of native plants to your garden or neighborhood space. The FOSC Native Plant Sale features straight native species rather than cultivars, grown by Howard Ecoworks.

The plants are primarily quart sized and the sale price is \$7.50. We also have gallons of some species and these sell for \$13. FOSC will receive a percentage of sales.

Get plants for fall planting while supporting FOSC and our local pollinators! Easy, local pickup too.

- [View and order your plants here](#) until **Thurs, Oct. 26 at 11:59pm**. *Note: no organization code is needed!*
- Plan to pick up your plants in Takoma Park on:
 - Fri, Oct. 27, 5pm to 8pm;
 - Sat, Oct. 28 - Mon, Oct. 30, 8am to 8pm.
- The pick up location is 7010 Woodland Ave, Takoma Park, MD 20912
- FOSC member Walter Mulbry is available to answer your questions at wmulbry@gmail.com.



*Buckeyes on Hairy White
Oldfield Aster
(K. Zimmer photo)*

*About Howard Ecoworks:
Through their Seeds of Change program, an environmental and workforce development program at the plant nursery in the Jessup Corrections facility, Howard Ecoworks provides job training in nursery management and plant propagation to incarcerated individuals to promote their transition back into society.*

STORMWATER/NATURAL HISTORY

Organic Lawn Care

Organic lawn care is about more than not using pesticides and herbicides. Mary Travaglini of the MoCo Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP) explained why at a FOSC presentation in late Sept.

See the [video of Mary's talk on the FOOSC YouTube channel](#), and view the [presentation slides on the FOOSC Natural History page](#).



Mary Travaglini

Some key takeaways are:

Leave the Leaves

Leave them under bushes and trees, and in your flower beds. Though you can mow them, best is to leave them as is. Insects use the leaves to overwinter, as a blanket or a cocoon for protection, or as a host for their winter stage within the leaf. In the spring as caterpillars, they are the staple food for baby birds.

Nature's Mulch

The leaves function as mulch throughout the winter and early spring, but without importing plant diseases or jumping worms, as can happen with mulch. For lawns, mow the leaves several times and leave them to decompose.

Soil Boost

Maintaining a healthy lawn starts by supporting soil biology. Grass clippings and leaves put nutrients back into the soil by feeding soil organisms that breakdown and make the nutrients soluble for plants. Those organisms also bind soil with secretions, increase water infiltration and soil moisture, immobilize nutrients so they don't wash out, and protect plant roots from disease. Leaves are a natural fertilizer for your flower beds, bushes and trees (away from the trunk and tree knees.) Whereas synthetic fertilizers only feed the plant, organic matter feeds the soil.

Mow High and Sharp

Taller grass shades out weeds, captures more sun to turn into energy, and keeps the ground cool. Sharp cut grass blades transpire less water, require less plant energy to heal, and prevent attack from diseases. Leave the grass clippings on the lawn for the soil.

Aerate

Use a core aerator to loosen compacted soil and create spaces for compost and water to mix into the soil, and provide air to microorganisms that help plants process nutrients.

Free shade trees

MoCo DEP offers free shade trees to MoCo residents through their [Tree Montgomery](#) program which provides assistance selecting a tree, planting it, and regular guidance for maintaining it. The site has a helpful tree profile page and [a guide to 10 other tree planting programs](#) in MoCo. Let's be cool and spread some shade in summer!

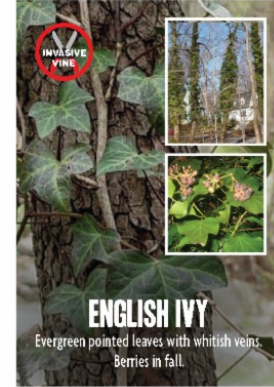
KNOW WHAT YOU GROW

Invasive Plants in Sligo and Long Branch

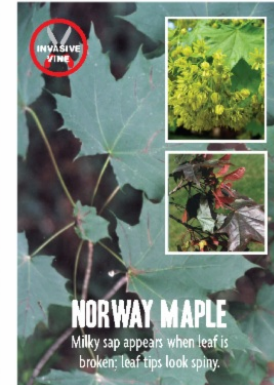
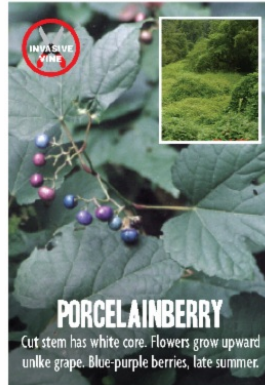
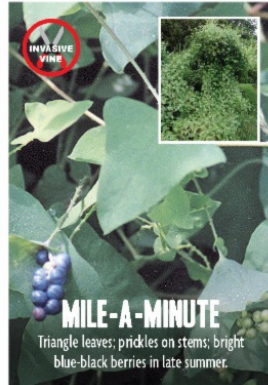
barge in and hog resources



**ARE INVASIVE
PLANTS IN
YOUR YARD?**



NON-NATIVE INVASIVES CROWD OUT NATIVE PLANTS AND COULD BE SPREADING FROM YOUR YARD.



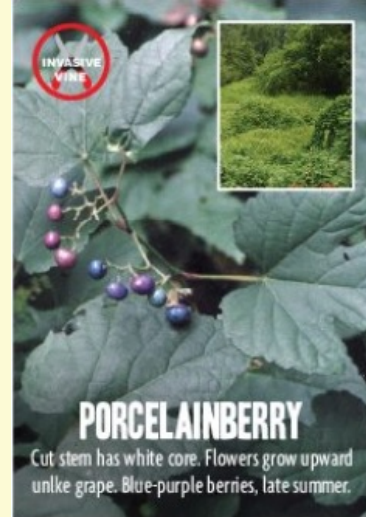
**Have you unwittingly let one of these invasive plants grow in your yard?
Please consider replacing them!**

Without natural predators (i.e., native animals/insects don't eat them), non-native invasive plants (NNIs) can easily overtake native plants. Even if you don't see them spreading in your yard, their seeds are often carried into other yards in the neighborhood and into the Creek and Park by birds, animals, stormwater, or the wind. This puts food pressure on animals and pollinators who need our native plants to survive.

See the [Resources on Invasive Plants page](#) of the FOSC website for other common NNIs in backyards and in Sligo Creek and Long Branch parks. The Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources recently updated the regional [Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas](#) guide.

Porcelainberry is one of the most destructive invasive plants in our area. It quickly forms a mat over trees, bushes and groundcover, smothering them all. Bad infestations resemble a huge blanket that obscures everything under it. The pretty blue

and purple berries are deceiving - they are poisonous to people and spread this vine quickly. If you've got it, pull it!



Native Plants in Sligo and Long Branch

give back by providing food

Here are some ideas for replacing invasives with native plants, which support the ecosystem and don't damage Sligo Creek and Long Branch park land.

Liriope alternatives:

- Sedges such as: Blue sedge (*Carex glaucoidea*), Shallow sedge (*Carex lurida*), Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pennsylvanica*), Tussock sedge (*Carex stricta*)
- Ferns, especially Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*), Eastern wood fern (*Dryopteris marginalis*)
- Native pachysandra (*Pachysandra procumbens*)
- Golden ragwort (*Packera aurea*)
- Native Blue Iris (*Iris versicolor*) if the site is wet, or Dwarf Crested Iris (*Iris cristata*)
- Deciduous options include Wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*), and native Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*).

Native Plants from the Sligo Native Plant Garden Program plant list:

Sunny sites

Roundleaf Ragwort (*Packera obovata*),
Blue-eyed Grass (*Sisyrinchium angustifolium*)
Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)
Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
Wreath Goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*)
Mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*)
Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*)

Shady sites

Golden Ragwort (*Packera aurea*)
Dwarf Crested Iris (*Iris cristata*)
Christmas Fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*)
Zigzag Goldenrod (*Solidago flexicaulis*)
Great Blue Lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*)
Goat's Beard (*Aruncus dioicus*)
White Wood Aster (*Eurybia divaricata*)



Penstemon (*Penstemon digitalis*)
flowers May - July

(Photo from [Bumble Bee Flower Finder](#))

Many nurseries in our area sell native plants; these three (and likely others) specialize in local ecotype native plants, which are adapted to our local soil and growing conditions:

Chesapeake Natives nursery in Rosaryville, MD, a non-profit.

Bona Terra nursery in Friendship, MD and DC.

Earth Sangha in Fairfax, VA.

The **Maryland Native Plant Society** maintains a list of nurseries with native plants, as does **FONTT** on their **Where to Buy Native Plants** page, and many other local garden clubs and environmental organizations.



Common jewelweed in flower
(Allen Browne photo)

For native plant info, the **Maryland Native Plant Society** has many resources on native plants, including the **Landscaping with Native Plants** regional guide to native plants, including growing conditions and value to wildlife and pollinators.

Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping - a pamphlet from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Alliance for the Bay's Native Plant Center, an online database for finding the right plant for the right place. Managed by the Alliance for the Bay and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Montgomery County Dept. of Environmental Protection has created these and other guides as part of their **Rainscapes program**:

-Ten Easy Native Plants for Sunny Gardens

-Twelve Easy Native Plants for Shady Gardens

-12 Deer Resistant Plants

-12 Native Shrubs

-Conservation Landscaping Planting Design Templates with native plants

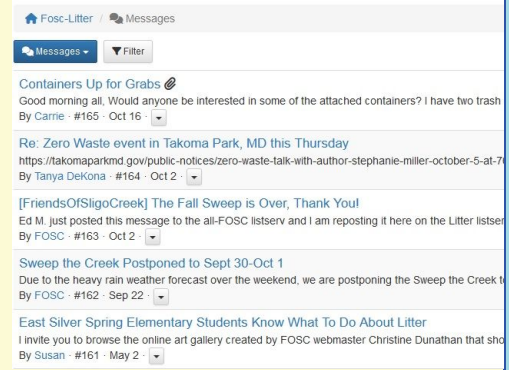
STAY IN TOUCH

Are you on the FOSC Main Listserv?
It's simple to join!

If you're receiving this eNewsletter, then you're a member of FOSC – thank you!

As a FOSC member, you get early notice of news and events, programs, and volunteer opportunities.

But did you know that FOSC also has listservs so we can interact with each other on various topics affecting Sligo Creek? **Fewer than 8% of you reading this newsletter are on the main listserv!**



A FOSC listserv in digest view

That means 92% of you are missing out on messages posted by fellow FOSC members, such as articles of interest, upcoming Parks improvements, and the latest Water Watchdog reports in Sligo and Long Branch.

There's a simple remedy – just send an email message to:

FriendsOfSligoCreek+subscribe@groups.io

to join the main listserv. It's not a lot of mail (plus you can opt for a digest) and it's moderated so you won't get spam. You will find out quickly about things like which parts of Sligo Creek Parkway are closed due to flooding or if there's a pop-up event happening that won't make it in time for the newsletter.

If you have an interest in a particular topic like litter, stormwater, advocacy, and water quality. there are specific listservs for just those groups too. Visit the [FOSC home page](#) to see the list and click to join them. They are open to FOSC members, free, and simple to join, like our main listserv. If you are a certified Weed Warrior, there is a listserv for you, too.

Listsers members are see the latest happenings at FOSC and in the watershed.

"Don't delay – join the FOSC listserv(s) today!"

Please be sure to view the entire newsletter including the Recent Nature Sightings by clicking on "View entire message" or similar text at the bottom of your browser.

DID YOU KNOW?

The City of Bowie's Public Works Solid Waste/Recycling has scheduled a paper shredding and styrofoam recycling event at the parking lot located at 16300 Annapolis Rd. this Saturday, October 28, 2023, from 8:00am to 2:00pm. Go early - they may reach capacity before 2pm.

Long Sleeve T-shirts are back! Ballcaps are in!

Great for giving to friends and family



The new FOSC ballcaps in a classic low profile style in slate blue and dark green. 100% cotton with the FOSC logo embroidered on the front.



*Sligo resident Zia models the FOSC organic cotton T-shirt.
(J. Kassovic photo)*

A FOSC T-shirt makes a great gift for family and friends. This is the one you will wear all the time - soft, breathable, and with a great message!

The tees are made of organic cotton. The short sleeved tees are available in 5 sizes, small to XXL. The prices range from \$22 - \$25. The long sleeved tees are available in S - XXL. Prices range from \$26 to \$28.

Ball caps are the latest addition to the store. They're adjustable, made of 100% cotton and can be had for a very reasonable \$18.

You can order the tees, ballcaps, and mugs directly from the [FOSC store](#) or on the upper right tab of the [FOSC homepage](#). All sales support FOSC programs.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

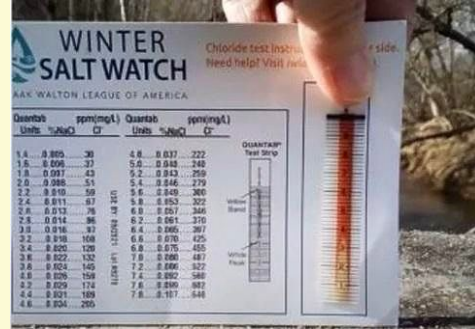
Upcoming Events /Volunteer Opportunities

FOSC Winter Salt Watch Program

The FOSC Winter SaltWatch program is gearing up shortly to be ready for the winter salt testing season. We have made some changes that should improve our data collection and recording, and

give us a more nuanced picture of the salt -- from roadways, parking lots, and residences -- that flows into the the creek in the winter months.

If you are interested in volunteering, keep an eye out for an email in the next week or so with more information. Then, please email the FOSC SaltWatch team at wq@fosc.org to let us know of your interest! Thanks.



Kestrel Meadow Walk Saturday, November 11, 9:00am – 10:00am 7100 16th PI, Hyattsville, MD 20783

FOSC members John Stith and Kristin Zimmer (FOSC Board member) have long been involved with the "Kestrel Meadow" above where the power lines cross Sligo Creek (Section 1). Join us on a walk to share what we know of plants, insects, and the sights and sounds of birds and other animals. Meet at the metal gate on the 7100 block of 16th Place, Hyattsville. Bring binoculars if you have some. The walk is free and happens rain or shine.

Watch the [FOSC Home page](#) and the [FOSC Calendar of Events](#) for Nov/Dec events.

NATURAL HISTORY

Recent Nature Sightings in Sligo



Spiders!

Just in time for Halloween, a selection of local spiders recently observed in the Sligo Creek watershed.

Above: A **Sylvan Jumping Spider**, complete with its multitude of eyes, seen along the paved trail, near Dallas Avenue Sept. 30 (Adrienne van den Beemt).



Jumping Spiders

Three more species in the Jumping Spider family (left to right): **Magnolia Green Jumping Spider** on Wayne Place Sept. 25 (marsrevolt), **Tan Jumping Spider** on Trescott Aug. 13 (Sharon Vandivere), and **Thin-spined Jumping Spider** on Wayne Place Aug. 11 (mars revolt).



Crab Spiders

Above: A **Crab Spider** in the genus *Mecaphesa* waits for its prey at the base of a morning glory in the powerline on Sept. 16 (A. van den Beemt).



Three species in the Crab Spider family: **White-banded Crab Spider** (left) in the powerline meadow on Sept. 10 (K. Zimmer), one in the genus ***Mecaphesa*** (above) in the powerline Oct. 18 (A. van den Beemt), and **American Green Crab Spider** (below) with prey near Elson and 16th Pl. Aug. 31 (K. Zimmer).





Two species of **Crab Spider** in the tribe Misumenini: Above near Fenton and New York June 7 (Katja Shultz) and at right on Wayne Place Aug. 2 (marsrevolt).

Orbweavers



Two forms of the **Yellow Garden Spider** (in the Orbweaver family): A female (left) observed in the powerline meadow on Sept. 2 (A. van den Beemt) and a male (right) along Wayne Place on Aug. 1 (marsrevolt).



Two other spiders in the Orbweaver family: **Spotted Orbweaver** (above), well disguised among dead leaves; and a spider in the genus of **Long-jawed Orbweavers**, both found along the paved trail near Dallas Ave. Sept. 30 (A. van den Beemt).



Shore Spider (in the wolf spider family) along the paved trail near Dallas Ave. on Sept. 30 (A. van den Beemt).

Your gift funds FOSC programs

You can give via [this Donate button](#) - it's simple and secure.



Or if you prefer, send a check to the address
at the very bottom of this email.

Thank you!

Need to Reach Us?

President (Elaine Lamirande): president@fosc.org

Invasive Plants/RIP (Walter Mulbry): invasives@fosc.org

Litter/Sweep the Creek (Tanya DeKona / Ed Murtagh): litter@fosc.org

Advocacy (Kit Gage): advocacy@fosc.org

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Friends of Sligo Creek is a nonprofit community organization dedicated to protecting, improving, and appreciating the ecological health of Sligo Creek Park and its surrounding watershed.

[Join FOSC](#)



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