

Fee  
\$80  
Includes lunch

## Native Plant Symposium

*in partnership with the Garden Club of Georgia*

Wednesday, February 25

9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Garden Club of Georgia Headquarters, Terrace Room

Register Online at  
<https://t.uga.edu/6wn>

*Growing and protecting native plants is important for many reasons. They celebrate our state and region, they are well-suited to our region's growing conditions and they are the foundation of the complex ecosystem that supports insects, birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals. Join us for this year's Native Plant Symposium for an overview of native trees and forest ecosystems, with a focus on forest health, conservation and stewardship. The program will highlight current challenges and research shaping the future of our forests, while offering insight into tree health and forest restoration across the state.*

### Agenda for Native Plant Symposium 2026

**9-9:15 Welcome & Announcements**

*State Botanical Garden of Georgia team*

*Diane Hunter, president, Garden Club of Georgia*

**9:15-10 Key Ways to Recognize and Protect High Value Trees and Greenspaces**

*Kathryn Kolb, executive director, EcoAddendum; Master Naturalist*

*The exceptional value of local trees, woodlands and urban forests in our region has often been overlooked. Kathryn discusses why our local forests hold such value, how trees can be a key to "reading" a forest in any season, and how communities can better protect native trees and forest resources in their communities.*

**10-10:45 Trees, People and Communities: Understanding Benefits, Threats and Opportunities**

*Ignazio Graziosi, assistant professor, Tree Biology and Health, UGA Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources*

*Trees in urban environments and in our communities differ from forest trees in their architecture, nutrition and root systems. This talk will explore the benefits, or ecosystem services, provided by trees to people and the environment. We will examine the stressors and threats they face, including abiotic and biotic factors, their interactions, and how these impacts affect tree health and the benefits they provide. The session will also discuss how the characteristics of urban trees, the benefits they provide, and the threats they face influence their care and maintenance. Finally, we will explore ways to create opportunities to optimize tree benefits and increase public knowledge about trees.*

**10:45-11 What's for Sale at the Plant Sale?**

*horticulture & conservation departments, State Botanical Garden of Georgia*

**11-11:45 Break & Plant Sale**

**11:45-12:30 Restoring Longleaf: An Ecosystem Approach to Building a Resilient Forest**

*Carol Denhof, president, The Longleaf Alliance*

*The longleaf pine ecosystem represents one of the most diverse habitats in North America. It originally covered approximately 90 million acres of the southeastern U.S. but was reduced to nearly 3 million acres by the middle of the 20th century. Landowners and partners across the southeastern U.S. are working together to restore this unique forest. In addition to planting trees,*

*many are focused on restoring the entire ecosystem so they can fully realize the benefits of a functioning longleaf forest. One such benefit is biodiversity, and the foundation of this biodiversity is the groundcover. Restoring this component of the forest is a crucial first step in the process of bringing back longleaf. This presentation will provide a look back at the history of longleaf, a description of the longleaf ecosystem, an overview of restoration and management processes, and a summary of how The Longleaf Alliance contributes to efforts across the range.*

**12:30-1 Lunch & Certificate in Native Plants and Plants & Pollinators Specialization Graduation Ceremony**

*Terrace room, Garden Club of Georgia Headquarters*

*Graduation ceremony begins at 12:45.*

**1-1:30 Plant Sale & Free Time around the Garden**

**1:30 – 2:15 Stories Exploring Thompson Mills Forest with Mr. Bill**

*Bill Lott, former director, Thompson Mills Forest and State Arboretum*

*Brad Smith, assistant forest resource manager, Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources*

*This session offers an engaging history and overview of Thompson Mills Forest and the State Arboretum of Georgia, including its transformation from agricultural land into Georgia's official state arboretum. Mr. Bill will highlight key moments in the arboretum's history before sharing practical tricks of the trade related to tree identification, horticultural practices and landscape management. Drawing from decades of experience, he will introduce participants to native trees of the Southeastern U.S., with insights into taxonomy and field identification. The session is enriched with stories from photographing trees for books and memorable moments, such as sharing pie with Vince Dooley. Attendees can expect an informative, practical, and warmly personal exploration of trees, place and professional practice. He will be joined by Brad Smith, Assistant Forest Resources Manager and Inventory Officer at UGA's Warnell School of Forestry, who will share the latest developments and operations at the Thompson Mills Forest.*

**2:15-2:45 Postcards**

*Certificate in Native Plants and Plants & Pollinators graduates will share how their experiences in the programs not only increased their botanical literacy but also developed community connections through conservation and restoration projects.*

**2:45-3:30 Tree Care Prescriptions for Community Enhancement**

*Edward Morrow, ISA certified arborist, Tree S.T.A.R.S.*

*The right tree care prescription helps you preserve trees and reduce costs, while keeping your community safe and beautiful. Do you have to be an arborist to understand a tree prescription? Not at all! In this hands-on conversation, you'll learn five simple strategies to manage trees in a low-stress way.*

**3:30 Closing Remarks & Adjourn**

**3:30-4 Optional Native Tree Walk**

*\$10 Add-On, Limited Spots Available*