



Neighborhood Spotlight: Kate Winsor



NORTH OAKS– In 2015 Kate converted a portion of her yard into a native woodland. The project benefits the watershed by reducing runoff sloping down to the street, and as an added benefit reduces the spread of invasive plants. The area was previously filled with burdock, stinging nettle, turf grass, and invasive garlic mustard and buckthorn, which have little value for the watershed. Conversely, the native woodland plants such as wild ginger, dogwood and honeysuckle bushes, and ironwood trees benefit the watershed through soil stabilization, holding water during dry periods, and slowing the movement of water across the yard’s slope. As the trees intercept precipitation with their leaves and branches, the lower vegetation stabilizes soil on the ground level.

For an added benefit the native plants support pollinators and other wildlife, and the bird box attracts bluebirds and tree swallows (depending on the year). Kate even had her garden certified as a Garden for Wildlife with the National Wildlife Federation ([click here](#) for more info).



Native Plant Chat:

What do you enjoy most about the restored planting?

The area is much more appealing to the eye. Although it is not a "showy" area, we are enjoying the subtle beauty of woodland plants. One has to look closely for the small, inconspicuous flowering parts of some of the plants.

How has it changed your interaction with your yard?

Our experience with the restoration has encouraged us to improve other areas of our property. We converted our grassy lawn to a bee lawn (by adding white clover, creeping thyme, and other flowering plants) and planted another area with no-mow fescue.

What's the most challenging part of the native planting?

A large portion of the restored area was seeded with native wildflowers. Sowing seeds was much more economical than investing in wildflower plant plugs (A plug is a young plant that has a great jump-start). The seeds struggled to germinate and grow, especially because of aggressive weedy plants. We constantly battled garlic mustard and other invasive plants by weed whacking and hand pulling. After struggling for a few growing seasons, we added native wildflower plugs to the area this spring and are hoping for better results.

What has surprised you as you've maintained the area and watched it grow?

Once the plants are established, it's remarkable at how good native plants are at keeping invasive species at bay. The spreading branches of the gro-low sumac is especially good at blocking the growth of weedy plants. Garlic mustard was the toughest invasive plant to eradicate, but with two years of weed-whipping it combined with the native plants filling the space, none came back this year!

What would you do differently if you did the same project again?

Rather than starting the woodland wildflowers from seeds, we would invest in native woodland plant plugs. Although plugs are more expensive than starting from seed, using plugs would have helped the area fill in quickly. Plugs are also easier to identify, making the area easier to weed.

Native Plant Specs:

Installation: 2015

Project size: 4,500 ft²

Native plants: Gro-low sumac, nannyberry, ironwood, lady fern, wild ginger, arrowwood, Pennsylvania sedge, dwarfbush honeysuckle, pagoda dogwood, and woodland wildflower seed mix (wild geranium, wild ginger, Solomon's seal, and others).