



Make Your Voice Heard!

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is seeking public input regarding PA's public and private forests. [Take this online survey](#) to help shape the future management of PA's forests!

PLANT SPOTLIGHT OF THE MONTH



Sassafras albidum

Sassafras is one of the plants I am always excited to find in the forest or backyard. Most folks have heard of it, especially in regards to the use of the roots for tea and for flavoring root beer. Actually, the roots, leaves, and twigs all have potential

medicinal and edible value (**be sure to do your research on safety advisories regarding ingesting large quantities of the root infusions**), and the history of these uses originates with Indigenous people of this continent. Since the colonists quickly became enthused with the plant as well and probably over-harvested, it's lucky that Sassafras is really abundant and fast-growing. It's one of the few native plants in the Pennsylvania region that I believe you can ethically harvest from the root without fear of endangering the population. In fact, some folks may find it to be a "weedy" visitor in their backyard garden or woodland space!

Sassafras is a fast-growing understory tree that is quick to inhabit disturbed sites. You are likely to find it in dry pine-oak forests, among a variety of other ecosystems. The key identifying trait of Sassafras is the unique leaf habit: typically on a single specimen, you will find oval leaves, leaves with two lobes (like mittens), and leaves with three lobes (like a ghost shape). Some special trees even have leaves with four or five lobes! Young stems are often smooth green, while mature trunks have a layer of reddish-orange bark just under the outer layer. Many wild animals like deer, woodchucks, rabbits, bears, and birds enjoy eating twigs, leaves, or fruits of Sassafras.

Summer Eco-Landscaping Services

- **Chemical-free weed & pest management (including Spotted Lanternfly treatments)**
- **Tree services with a certified arborist**
- **Garden & woodland cleanup**
- **Design and installation of gardens, patios, fences, raised beds, container gardens, and irrigation systems**
- **Routine maintenance**
- **Home ecosystem consultations**

We can help make your home and garden beautiful and beneficial—for you, the ecosystem, and the planet. [Learn more and book your spring services via our website.](#)



Spotting the Spotted Lanternfly

Unfortunately, our [Lanternfly article](#) featured on the Applied Research and Education site is just as relevant as ever. If you didn't read it last year, I definitely recommend referencing it this summer, as soon as possible. As with many gardening tasks, timing can be so important. Right now, the nymphs in our neighborhood are transitioning into their fourth stage of life (where they turn red instead of black). They become harder and harder to

catch and kill after this point.

Besides the invasive Tree of Heaven plants, SLFs love congregating on weedy and invasive vines and suckering new growth on trees. This illuminates the importance of maintaining your outdoor space. Even if you leave a space to be more "wild," making a point to get rid of aggressive vines and all seedlings of Tree of Heaven will reduce the food source for the SLFs. As described in the article, we aren't generally in favor of spraying plants with insecticide. Our EFTE crews employ organic solutions to address SLF infestations.

SAVE THE DATE

Still looking for more practical help to manage your SLF infestation? Well, our CEO and owner Sherrilyn Billger has been dealing with SLFs since they first entered the country in 2014. She's seen them cluster on tree branches like a plague, felt their honeydew drip on her shoulders (ew!), and kept them from ruining her vegetable garden.

On **Saturday, July 25 at 10:00 AM** Sherrilyn will offer a live Zoom video discussion regarding safe and effective SLF treatment that will not harm other important insects like bees. You'll hear about her experiences and the relevant research in the field. You can join the free video call by using this link: <https://zoom.us/j/94042777812>

Foraging Fun: Fruit!



The chances are pretty high that somewhere in or near your neighborhood, there are mulberry trees planted in yards or in public spaces. These pictured mulberries came from trees near Falls Bridge. When they are fruiting, they're easy to find, since there's no other tree with fruits that look quite like it. But it can be helpful to know key identifying traits for the overall tree. What to look for:

- Alternate buds that open fairly late in the spring season
- Heart shaped leaves with serrated edges (for Black Mulberries); oval or various lobed shapes for other species
- Black Mulberry trees are often described as "gnarly" in shape/growth habit and bark texture



THE CROP CORNER

Tips for your veggie garden

Did you know that you could be pruning your tomato and zucchini plants?

When you prune at the right time, you can help the plant direct energy towards making more luscious fruits. Pruning can also increase air flow and decrease risk of disease. Of course, pruning out already-diseased leaves will help the plant stay healthy and hopefully stop the spread of any problems.

Tomatoes:

- Pruning can be done on varieties that produce fruit throughout the entire season
- Remove the bottom-most leaves and any low-hanging leaves that might be touching the ground
- Remove a few leaves or branches from the center of cage-bound plants (select branches that are producing no or few flowers)
- Remove damaged or diseased leaves

Zucchini:

- It's safe to prune once you have had about five zucchinis develop
- Focus on removing lower leaves and stems that are below the level of fruits; often these will be in the dirt and raggedy already
- Cut out any large, outermost leaves that may be shading out other plants
- Remove damaged or diseased leaves

Be sure to use a clean, sharp tool!



Eating for the Ecosystem is a woman-owned business with predominately-female work crews. In addition to our meticulous and eco-friendly practices such as limiting our carbon footprint and composting landscape debris, we are also committed to helping clients learn more



about—and develop stronger relationships with—the plants in our ecosystem.

Help us Grow

If you believe a friend or family member would like to learn about Eating for the Ecosystem, please [forward this newsletter](#).



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