

Meet Our Seminar Speakers!

Keynote Speaker: Vincent A. Simeone

Seminar: Thinking Outside the Box: Selecting Alternatives to Common Evergreens

There are many tried and true evergreens used in the garden such as rhododendron and azaleas, arborvitae, cherry laurel, Leyland Cypress, mountain laurel, holly, Pine, Spruce and viburnum. These popular mainstays offer reliable aesthetic value and versatility in the landscape. But some of these plant groups are quite overused, resulting in a monotonous, vulnerable landscape with little to no diversity. This lecture will offer some more modern and underutilized genera of evergreens as well as lesser-known species and cultivars of popular genera we know and love. Special emphasis will be put on proper selection, pest and deer resistance, specific care and maintenance, landscape function and benefits in the landscape.

Seminar: Plants that We Love to Hate...and Their Desirable Alter Egos

There are so many ornamental landscape plants that have been overused, misused, contracted unmanageable disease and insect issues or that have developed into invasive nightmares over the years. Plants like Barberry, Euonymus, Norway Maple, Callery Pear, American Arborvitae, Leyland Cypress and “Schip” Laurel lead a cast of characters that have developed into problem plants. Others like boxwood, taxus and Colorado spruce, while still desirable, are often being replaced with more appropriate substitutes. This lecture will provide an in depth look at some of the trees, shrubs, vines, and groundcovers that have wreaked havoc or caused unavoidable stress to our cultivated landscapes and will provide kinder and gentler alternatives to each. Special emphasis will be given to native and non-invasive exotics plants that provide exceptional ornamental value, superior landscape function, adaptability, deer resistance and benefits to wildlife.

Vincent Simeone is a seasoned horticulturist with over 37 years of experience, holding degrees in ornamental horticulture and public administration. He specializes in woody plant identification, selection, and sustainable gardening practices, and teaches at the New York Botanical Garden. Vincent is a prolific speaker, delivering around 50 lectures annually across the nation, and he has contributed to various garden shows and publications. He has published six books on gardening and has received numerous accolades, including in 2021 he received the George L. Good Gold Medal of Horticulture from PLANT NYS.

Thom Allgaier

Seminar: NYS Invasive Species Regulation PART 575 - Brief Update on Some of the Invasive Species in Your Region

Presentation will cover the NYS invasive species regulation PART 575, and a brief update on some of the invasive species in your region including Spotted Lantern Fly, Box Tree Moth, and touch on Plum Pox Virus.

Thom Allgaier is the Invasive Species Coordinator for the NYS Dept. of Agriculture & Markets. With over 20 years of public service between federal and state positions dealing with invasive plant pests. Prior to his public service he worked in various landscape construction, garden center and greenhouse positions. Thom holds an associate's degree in Ornamental Horticulture from Farmingdale State University, a Bachelor's of science from Empire State College where he studied Environmental Biology, and a Master's of Science degree from University of North Carolina – Wilmington where he studied Environmental Science.

Richard Buckley

Seminar: The Trouble with Beech: Beech Leaf Diseases & Others

If it's not one thing, it's another! Invasive insect pests and diseases have wreaked havoc on ash, elm, chestnut, hemlock, and many others, wiping some of them almost completely from American landscapes and forests. The recent emergence of a new nematode disease in Beech has the attention of all green industry professionals. This one-hour session will cover everything we currently know about Beech Leaf Disease. Other diseases and insect pests of beech will be included. Emphasis will be on proper identification, scouting and monitoring techniques, and integrated control strategies that include all cultural, biological, and chemical controls.

Seminar: Engravers and Fungus Farming Beetles in the Urban Forest!

This 60-minute lecture will focus on climate change and its impact on the common and invasive engraver and ambrosia beetles found in Northeastern landscapes and forests. Each insect will be profiled to include insect identification, biology and ecology, symptom diagnosis, scouting and monitoring techniques, and current concepts in integrated control that includes all cultural, biological, and chemical management strategies.

Richard Buckley is the director of Rutgers Plant Diagnostic Laboratory. Richard is an instructor in the Rutgers Professional Golf Turf Management School and Rutgers Department of Pathology and Plant Science. He teaches courses in diseases and insect pests of turfgrass and ornamental plants. He is also a frequent lecturer and invited speaker on disease and insect pest problems in turf and ornamentals, plant problem solving, and pest management techniques.

Ron Callea

Seminar: Soils and the Importance of Drainage.

Common solutions for surface and sub-surface drainage and the selection of plants suitable for poor drainage sites.

Ron Callea is a horticulture instructor at McKinley High School in Buffalo. He has New York State permanent certifications in Plant Science, Earth Science and Biology. Ron is also the owner of Callea Landscapes which he started in 2001. Ron has over 42 years in the industry and previously worked at Suburban Landscaping and Asplundh Tree Expert.

Natalie Carmolli

Seminar: Boxwood Done Right: Selection, Care, and Smart Substitutes

Success with boxwood starts with good selection and realistic expectations. This presentation covers best practices for choosing and maintaining boxwood, then expands into proven alternatives for sites where boxwood is not the right fit. Ideal for nurseries and landscapers looking to reduce risk while still delivering polished, professional results.

Seminar: The Next Generation of Shrubs: What's New and Noteworthy for WNY

Plant breeding is evolving to meet the demands of tougher climates, disease and pest management, and shifting consumer expectations. This program introduces the latest Proven Winners® ColorChoice® shrubs, with a focus on cold hardiness, problem-solving traits, and plants that make sense for WNY's green industry. Attendees will leave with a clear picture of which new introductions are worth watching and why.

Natalie Carmolli is a public relations specialist for Spring Meadow Nursery/Proven Winners® ColorChoice® shrubs. Natalie grew up in the floral industry, has a bachelor's degree in the theatrical arts, has earned a Certificate of Mastery in tree and shrub identification from Longwood Gardens, and of course, is an avid gardener. And she LOVES talking about shrubs.

David Clark, CNLP

Seminar: Plant Installation Techniques for Professional Landscapes 101

This presentation provides a comprehensive technical framework for successful plant installation and long-term health. Moving beyond basic gardening tips, we will discuss botanical protocols required to minimize plant mortality and maximize project ROI. Success in the field is a result of 10% planting and 90% preparation. This session ensures your team is equipped with solid horticulture information for every stage of the process

David Clark has over 20 years of experience in the dirt and the classroom, He is a cornerstone of the Western New York horticultural community. David has spent decades helping to shape the gardens of Buffalo through work with Grassroots Gardens, the Massachusetts Avenue Project, and Urban Roots Community Garden Center.

In addition to 12 years of instruction at the Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens, David has served as an adjunct horticulture professor at SUNY Niagara. David's expertise is backed by the prestigious PlantNYS CNLP of the Year award and national recognition as a Who's Who in America rising business executive, with a biography permanently housed in the United States Library of Congress. A published author in Birds and Blooms magazine, David continues to bridge the gap between academic horticulture and community-driven greening. In his spare time, David cares for an extensive personal collection of carnivorous plants, orchids, and rare houseplants

Paddy Conway

Join our guest speaker, Paddy Conway, as he navigates through the ins and outs of using the UVision 3D design software on your jobsites. Whether you want to simplify your elevation mapping or want to take your 3D design to the next level; this session will help give a better understanding of the capabilities UVision can provide.

The session will focus on how to start a design by using three simple methods starting with measured notes, a site survey or onsite photographs. It will also cover the basics on how to navigate the Uvision interface and how to quickly design buildings, patios, borders and basic walls. Learn helpful and time saving tips in just one session!

*** Required items for all attendees include: laptop, mouse and software downloaded to computer prior to arrival**

Seminar: In-Person Uvision® Simple Steps to Start a Design, Setup, and Short Cuts

The session will focus on how to start a design by using three simple methods starting with measured notes, a site survey or onsite photographs. It will also cover the basics on how to navigate the Uvision interface and how to quickly design buildings, patios, borders and basic walls. Learn helpful and time saving tips in just one session!

Seminar: In-Person Uvision® Advanced Design, Re-Enforcing Designing to Sell

Seminar: In-Person Uvision® Terrain and Presenting to Sell

Seminar: Hardscaping By the Hour - Estimating Hardscapes

Paddy will add this introductory class which will emphasize the importance of charging by the hour and how to build the perfect bid for your company's success. Learn how to convert your business data into your personal hourly rate and eliminate those costly and inaccurate square foot and face foot rates

Paddy Conway is a former college lecturer, born in Ireland, raised in Africa, schooled in Ireland and England. Has over 45 years of experience in construction technology, specializing in landscaping, hardscaping design and installation. Now living in the Chicago area, Paddy currently lectures at varying colleges and trade shows, specializing in teaching the nuances of Unilock's 3D software, Uvision, combined with their surveying apparatus, the Ulevel.

Jeff Fabian

Seminar: Basic Pruning 101

This class will present basic pruning techniques and how to apply them to plants in the landscape. Honing your skills and abilities will enable you to give your clients a healthy and aesthetically pleasing landscape. Put down the power shears and pick up the pruners!

Jeff Fabian is an ISA Certified Arborist with a degree in Forestry from Paul Smith's College. He has been a practicing arborist for 27+ years. Currently, Jeff runs his own business, The Altreeist, and he also works for Lockwood's Greenhouses and Farm in the tree and shrub department.

Bryce Gossel, CNLP

Seminar: Modern Hardscape Tools and Equipment 101

How they impact efficiency, safety and employee morale.

Bryce Gossel is with Gossel Lawn & Landscape is a full-service landscape company that designs, installs, and maintains landscapes with proper horticultural practices. He also is a Certified Nursery and Landscape Professional (CNLP).

Tom Mitchell

Seminar: Lawn Maintenance 101 "THE WHYS"

Quality lawn care is what we as members in Plant WNY should be providing our customers. This talk will be about what we should be doing to make that happen.

Seminar: NOT Best Practices for Pesticide Applicators

This presentation will discuss some of the common mistakes that pesticide applicators should not be making. It will include an opportunity for those attending to comment or add their own thoughts as well. Tom will include some of the dumb things he has done as well.

Tom Mitchell is presently teaching horticulture at SNY Niagara and previously taught horticulture at McKinley High School for 33 years. Tom teaches the plant protection class at NCCC which results in the 30-hour certification needed to take the state pesticide exam. Tom is the owner of Mitchell Landscaping Inc. Mitchell Landscaping specializes in landscape maintenance. Tom is a past president of the NYS Agriculture Teachers Association and PLANT WNY and served as trustee of the WNYSNLA Foundation.

Ken Parker, CNLP

Seminar: Right Plant, Right Place: WNY Native Plant Solutions

This presentation introduces Western New York native plants for use in residential, commercial, and environmental landscapes. Attendees will learn what defines a native plant and explore trees, shrubs, grasses, and perennials suited to common site conditions—including wet soils, rain gardens, shade, and drought. The session highlights both the ecological benefits and ornamental value of native plants, with practical guidance for successful selection and use.

Ken Parker is a horticulturist with over 30 years of experience as a professional grower, nurseryman, consultant, and educator. A lifetime New York State Certified Nursery Landscape Professional (CNLP), he has contributed to conservation, green infrastructure, and restoration projects across the U.S. and Canada, with a strong focus on native plants. Ken currently serves as Native Plant Specialist at Masterson's Garden Center and is Vice President of Wild Ones Western New York.

Bill Snyder

Seminar: What's Bugging Us?

Bill Snyder reviews the insects and diseases that affect trees and shrubs, Past problems, an update on current insects and diseases, and what to look for in the future. Last year's drought will be included, and how it affected trees and shrubs with twig dieback, insect activity and plant establishment.

Bill Snyder is a Registered Consulting Arborist accredited by American Society of Consulting Arborists. He began his career after college with Lewis Tree Service and then started and operated Frontier Tree and Lawn Service in Buffalo, NY. He is a Certified Arborist and a member of the International Society of Arboriculture. Bill has served on a variety of boards including The NYS Arborists Association, PLANT WNY, PLANT WNY Foundation Landscape, NYS American Chestnut Foundation and Pheasants Forever Western New York chapter, which is devoted to developing and maintaining wildlife habitat. Bill has been a guest lecturer for the NYS Urban Forestry Council, the WNYSNLA, the New York Turfgrass Association, and the Michigan Green Industry Association. Bill has developed and taught woody plant care, and plant appraisal seminars at Buffalo State College. He instructed numerous seminars on tree care to groups in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

Steven Sypniewski, Lifetime CNLP

Seminar: Using Pre & Post Emergent Herbicides in Your Ornamental Landscape Beds

Steve discusses the proper products and timing for the use of both pre and post emergent herbicides.

Steve Sypniewski is a lifelong resident of WNY and has over 40 years' experience in the green industry. After receiving a degree from SUNY Alfred State in Landscape Development, Steve worked for several Buffalo area landscape firms, including his own firm, Hilltop Landscape & Design. Steve has been the arborist for Buffalo State University since 2011 and does tree and landscape consulting. Steve has a wide range of landscape contracting experience, including design/build, maintenance and tree service. In addition to his lifetime CNLP, he is an ISA Certified Arborist, and a NYS certified pesticide applicator in

category 3A. Steve is a past president of PLANT WNY was honored in 2024 as the NYS CNLP of the year and in 2025 as the PLANT WNY person of the year.

Sharon Webber, Lifetime CNLP

Seminar: Understanding the Most Important Plant Nutrient...WATER

Understanding Key Roles of Water in Plants...physiological, biochemical and structural; Mechanisms of Water Absorption and Transport...how do plants access water and how does it move through a plant; Practical Insights for Plant Hydration...help for us and help for our customers

Sharon Webber is a horticultural consultant, educator, and trainer. As a NYS Certified Nursery & Landscape Professional with over 35 years of experience, she specializes in assisting residential and commercial clients with solutions for a wide array of gardening and landscaping needs, staying true to her commitment to being a good steward of the environment. Her career in horticulture began over 35 years ago at The Plantage, Inc. on Long Island where she worked for the renowned plants-woman Lois Woodhull. Eventually, Sharon returned to her hometown and established Earth Lines, a landscape maintenance and design/build company where she served as owner/operator for many years. Sharon's interests and experience led her to education and she built this part of her career as a Cornell Cooperative Extension Horticulture Educator and as an Adjunct Instructor in the Horticulture Program at Niagara County Community College. Wholesale plant production on Long Island, landscape/design build work, teaching and public lecturing make up the fabric of Sharon's career. Additionally, she is a past president of PLANT WNY; co-founder of Plantasia Garden and Landscape Show; PLANT WNY's Person of the Year (2000); past president of Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo; and a recent inductee into the PlantNYS Hall of Fame. Her proudest moments include being one of the first women to be elected to the PLANT WNY Board of Directors (1996) and during her tenure as President, spearheading the creation of Plantasia with the help of her fellow Green Industry professionals.

Tim Zimmerman, CNLP

Seminar: Drought Tolerant Plants

Tim Zimmerman has been a sales representative for Medford Nurseries for ten seasons, serving garden centers and landscapers in Western and Central NY and NW PA. He assists with plant selection and procurement for sale and installation, as well as teaching about plant varieties and design regularly at industry trade events. Tim spent 16 years as a designer and salesman with high volume landscape contractors in the Buffalo area, including 13 years as landscape manager with Menne Nursery in Amherst, NY. He lives and gardens with his wife and two kids in Snyder, NY, fighting the bunnies, deer, and clay right along with you.