

# GCFM NATIVE PLANT CHALLENGE

Volume VI | June 2021



Perfect spot to sit and relax - Bonnie Rosenthal's Native Backyard Garden.

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## FAVORITE NATIVE PLANT

**Barren Strawberry** (*Waldsteinia fragarioides*)

**Zones:** 3 to 8

**Soil:** Moist to dry

**Light:** Sun to Shade

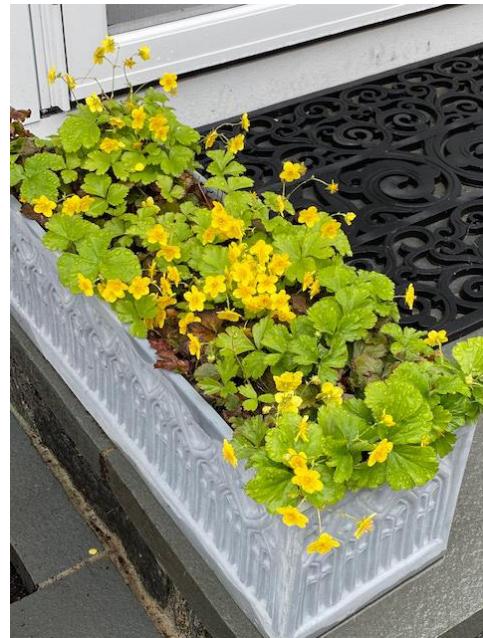
**Attributes:** 3 to 6" tall; 1/2 inch wide bright yellow, five-petaled flowers above unfolding, glossy, three-parted, initially light leaves in spring; leaves becoming dark green and glossy.

**Propagation:** easy to divide

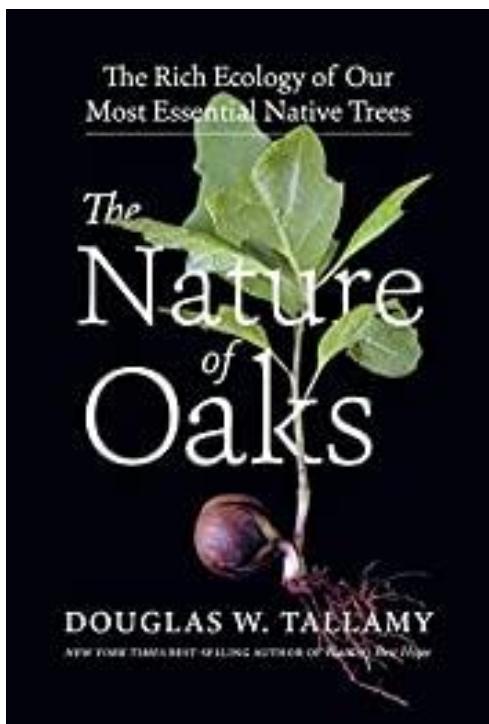
**Notes:** Barren Strawberry is a very adaptable, excellent ground cover worthy of consideration for the glossy, deep green foliage alone; spreads via rhizomes. Highly drought-tolerant once established.

"Is a wonderful ground cover once established (2-3 years). It also became quite happy in this container, quite by accident."

Submitted by Bonnie Rosenthal



## CONSERVATION: OAK TREES



If you are looking for one simple change to improve the ecology of your backyard, Doug Tallamy recommends planting an oak tree. In his new book, *The Nature of Oaks: The Rich Ecology of Our Most Essential Native Trees*, he says that the first thing he thinks about when considering the role of plants in ecosystems is their role in the food web, and how well they capture energy from the sun and turn it into food for animals. Oaks pass on that energy better than any other plant genus in North America. They are also great at sequestering carbon, which we need to limit climate change. They help to manage watersheds with their large canopies and root systems. They are, however, not as good at supporting pollinators as other trees such as maples and willows because they are wind pollinated.

Leaf litter from oaks acts as a blanket that protects the soil and insects that live in the

soil, better than other leaves that break down more easily. Oak leaves also help to maintain moisture in the soil and suppress invasive Japanese stilt grass and Asian jumping worms that are threats to forest ecosystems.

Probably the most impressive aspect of oak trees is their ability to support over 900 caterpillar species, most of them moths. There is no other genus that comes close to that figure. Caterpillars are important because they transfer more energy from plants to other animals than any other type of plant eater. Measuring the number of caterpillars in your ecosystem is a good way of determining how well energy is being transferred, and how much biodiversity you have in an ecosystem. Oak trees also support many insects such as katydids, walking sticks, tree crickets, lace bugs, plant hoppers, tree hoppers, gall wasps, periodical cicadas that feed our native songbirds, and other animals including deer, birds, squirrels, and turkeys.

So, plant some acorns or small bare root oak whips. Smaller trees will be healthier and grow faster than large tree transplants if you protect them from herbivorous animals.

*Deb Edinger, Bedford Garden Club*

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**CAN YOU SPOT THE NATIVES?**

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Where is the native in this garden?

**Native trees and Shrubs:** front to back - Dogwood (*Cornus florida*), Black Chokeberry, Fothergilla major, River Birch, and Hazelnut.



# Landscape Design Council

Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts

Presents a Free Zoom Lecture



## *Create Foundation Gardens That Say "Welcome Home" to Native Plants*

by Kathy Connolly

*Wednesday, June 16, 2021 @ 11:00 a.m.*

**Open to all Members of the GCFM: Register at [GCFM.org](http://GCFM.org)**

**T**he foundation garden need not be a bastion of imports such as pachysandra and boxwood. Learn about design problems posed by the foundation area of buildings. Discover how native plants can enhance those highly visible settings. Understand that by using regional native plants you can create a habitat for birds and pollinators while creating an aesthetically pleasing design.

**K**athy Connolly is a landscape designer who specializes in naturalized designs, low-impact techniques and native plants for homeowners, municipalities and other organizations. Connolly has a master's degree in landscape planning and design from the Conway School in Northampton, Massachusetts. She is an advanced master gardener and an Accredited Organic Land Care Professional through NOFA. Her "Green & Growing" column appears every two weeks in The Day community newspapers.



## GARDENS TO VISIT THIS SUMMER

Bonnie Rosenthal, North Chatham MA  
(July or August), 973-557-6186 (cell)

*All private garden tours should be arranged with the home/garden owner prior to any visit.  
Small garden Club groups are welcome. Limit 10 people.*

Do you have a favorite native plant? Share yours with us. Send photos and a short article as to why it is your favorite to GCFM  
([gardenclubfedma@gmail.com](mailto:gardenclubfedma@gmail.com)).

*Don't forget to visit the GCFM website often. You can find other NPC resources, as well as interesting events, webinars, GCFM programs, Schools, Workshops, Flower Shows and Awards.*



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