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September 4, 2018

**THE NATIVE PLANT CENTER CELEBRATES 20TH ANNIVERSARY
ON SEPTEMBER 29**

The Native Plant Center will honor two of its venerable leaders at its 20th Anniversary Celebration on Saturday, September 29 at the Larchmont Yacht Club. Carolyn Summers will receive the Center's Lady Bird Johnson Environmental Award, and Lucille Werlinich will receive the Acorn Award. In addition, special leadership recognition will go to founding director Brooke Beebe, and Barbara Fischer, Patricia H. Keesee, Denise Santomero, Phillis Warden, and Elizabeth S. Wattles for their many years of service and support as members of the Steering Committee.

The Center's Lady Bird Johnson Environmental Award recognizes an individual or a group for environmental advocacy and leadership, particularly involving native plants. The Acorn Award recognizes an individual or a group that inspires people to learn about native plants and to grow them in their own gardens.

Carolyn Summers has devoted thousands of hours to educating and impassioning people on the use of native plants. A dedicated member of The Native Plant Center's Steering Committee since 2004, she is a co-founder of and instructor in the certificate program Go Native U at Westchester Community College. For several years, she was chief coordinator of the annual Native Plant Sale. Carolyn, a landscape designer, developed her native plant expertise working for non-profit and government agencies. She is owner and creator of Flying Trillium Gardens & Preserve in the Catskills and author of *Designing Gardens with Flora of the American East*. She is a resident of Tarrytown, New York.

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Lucille Werlinich has been a pillar of The Native Plant Center since becoming a Steering Committee member in 2001. With expertise in banking and fundraising, she has been instrumental in ensuring the Center's longevity by growing its endowment, co-chairing benefits, and providing generous support. She also advocates for native plants through outreach at community events, including the Center's annual plant sale. Lucille is an active member of the Westchester Community College Foundation Board of Directors, continuing her family's long history in assisting students, faculty, and programs at the college. She also chairs the Purchase College Foundation. She is a resident of Purchase, New York.

Steering Committee members who have stewarded and sustained The Native Plant Center since its early years will also be recognized.

- Brooke Beebe, Briarcliff Manor, was Director of The Native Plant Center during its first ten years; she retired in 2008 and remains involved as a member of the Steering Committee.

- Barbara Fischer, Armonk, has co-chaired the Steering Committee and is a co-founder of and instructor in Go Native U.

- Patricia H. Keesee, Mt. Kisco, was one of the first chairs of the Steering Committee and was on the board of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Texas, where she often met the First Lady.

- Denise Santomero, Bedford, is a longtime supporter and on the board of the Westchester Community College Foundation.

- Phillis Warden, Bedford Hills, conceived of the annual Native Plant Sale, which today sells more than 10,000 plants.

- Elizabeth S. Wattles, Waccabuc, is a dedicated volunteer, especially during plant sale preparation as a mentor to new volunteers.

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“When The Native Plant Center opened its doors in 1998, few people were promoting the use of native plants in garden settings,” said Carol Capobianco, Director of the Center. “Our leaders were at the forefront of the movement—and many are still guiding us today. We are pleased to honor the commitment and dedication of these trailblazers.”

A vision brought to life... The year was 1998. We lost Frank Sinatra, learned how to Google, and paid just over a dollar for gasoline. Meanwhile, a new venture was commencing at Westchester Community College in Valhalla, New York, as its Foundation established The Native Plant Center, the first affiliate of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas.

Betsy Stern was president of the Foundation at the time and on the Board of Directors of Mrs. Johnson’s organization that promoted and protected native plants and natural landscapes. Betsy took the lead in expanding the First Lady’s vision beyond the borders of Texas to New York.

In a letter to The Native Plant Center that year, Mrs. Johnson wrote: “What you are endeavoring to do here to educate people about the benefits of using natives in planned landscapes and how to grow and care for them gives me great joy. I hope all who come here will find their pleasure in our living world enlarged and enriched. Betsy, I salute you, and send my good wishes for the Center’s success in the years ahead.”

Since then, The Native Plant Center has continued its mission to educate people about the environmental necessity, economic value, and natural beauty of native plants.

The Native Plant Center:

- Offers rich programming, conferences, and classes about native plants, serving a wide audience of home gardeners, industry professionals, and environmental groups

- Maintains a diversity of teaching gardens at the campus that interpret native plants and provide wildlife habitat—open to the public free of charge.

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- Educates and inspires people to understand and to plant natives through community outreach and partnerships

- Hosts one of the largest and most respected native plant sales in the region, selling more than 10,000 native plants annually. These plants add increasing value to municipal parks, community gardens, and backyards throughout the area.

In looking to the future, The Native Plant Center is enhancing its demonstration gardens, increasing educational opportunities, and maximizing its effectiveness:

- New American Cottage Garden: This beautiful new installation officially opened in June 2018. It teaches how to incorporate native plants in a home garden with elements such as a formal perennial bed, shrub borders, and water feature that illustrate sustainable gardening principles.

- Lady Bird Johnson Demonstration Garden Restoration and Expansion: Mrs. Johnson and her daughters attended the dedication of this garden in her name in 1999. Work is now underway to increase diversity in the meadow and its value as wildlife habitat. The redesign of pathways, clearing of invasive plants, installation of benches, creation of a screening area, and eventual plantings of native plant communities will enhance the site's educational role.

- Relevant, Robust Instruction: As a leader in nature education, The Native Plant Center continues to provide a wide variety of courses on sustainable gardening through its popular landscape conferences and Go Native U certificate program and continuing education classes.

- Partnerships: The Native Plant Center has a history of collaboration with other organizations, government agencies, and businesses and continues to grow and expand these beneficial relationships.

The 20th Anniversary event committee is chaired by Laura Blau, Bedford, and includes Catherine Ludden, Angel Morris, and Jessica A. Schuler. For more information about The Native Plant Center or the 20th anniversary celebration, call (914) 606-7870, email wcc.nativeplant@sunywcc.edu, or visit www.nativeplantcenter.org.