

Native Plant Podcasts

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Learning about native plants requires some effort, but that education itself can be deeply pleasurable—not only do you learn what to grow on your property and how to grow it, you learn about the landscape around you,

uncovering the natural wonders already here and the invasive thugs that threaten the national park you are creating in your back yard. There are so many gorgeous, beautiful books out there. I find myself fatally drawn to them. Where will these go? I suppose one day I will remove the architecture books from a shelf in my office and put them in the basement or maybe sell them. It'd be for the best.

While I garden, I like to listen to talk shows of some kind. In the late afternoon, I listen to the Julie Mason show on SiriusXM POTUS to get a hype-free sense of what is going on Washington, but in mornings I like to listen to podcasts and about half of the podcasts I listen to are about plants.

This may seem counter-intuitive since, of course, there are no visuals, but if you are gardening or, for that matter, going for a jog, you can educate yourself on North American native plants. Here's a list of some of the best. I've posted each podcast's web site, but if you listen in the Apple Podcast application on your iPhone, you can just search for the names of the podcasts and subscribe to them directly there.



In Defense of Plants

The first podcast isn't entirely about native plants, since its focus is global. Ph.D. candidate Matt Candeias is an enthusiastic guide to the world of botany and his obsession with plants is infectious. There aren't many better ways to get excited about plants. Matt finds weird and wonderful topics, insightful guests from the world of botanical research, and is a top-notch interviewer. Matt also maintains a blog at www.indefenseofplants.com

A Way to Garden with Margaret Roach

Margaret Roach has decades of gardening experience and is one of America's most loved writers about gardening. Margaret's podcast usually consists of an interview with a noted authority on matters such as composting, milkweed, attracting birds butterflies, native plants, as well as food and many other topics. Not all topics are native-plant oriented, but that's fine too. She often teams up with Ken Druse to discuss topical themes and answer questions. While the rest of these podcasts are useful sources of information, Margaret's podcast—as well as the excellent (and newly revised) book the podcast is named after—is particularly informative for gardeners. I have learned a huge amount from Margaret (and Ken) and am grateful whenever I hear her. Margaret also maintains a blog at her site.

I won't mention it separately since I 'm really only covering actively maintained podcasts here, but the archives of Ken's Real Dirt podcast are full of useful information for gardeners as well.

Wild Plant Culture

I'm happy to call Jared Rosenbaum a friend. He and his wife Rachel Mackow own and operate Wild Ridge Plants, a farm in western New Jersey where they grow beautiful New Jersey native plants. Jared recently started the Wild Plant Culture podcasts in which he conducts long-form interviews with noted authorities in the field, such as Leslie Sauer, ecological restoration practitioner and author of *The Once and Future Forest* or permaculture expert Dale Hendricks. Jared's blog is here.



The Field Guides

Here is a podcast ideal for people stuck in their apartments in the city. Hear the sound of crunching leaves as Bill Michalek and Steve Fleck (aka Bill and Steve) walk through the woods while discussing an aspect of the natural world, generally in western New York State. Like Matt Candieas, they both have science backgrounds so they research peer-reviewed literature for the podcasts, which often leads to their underscoring just how much more

science there is left to do on the natural world. One thing that I particularly love is that they generally contextualize whatever topic they are talking about within human culture as well. The Field Guides isn't very oriented toward growing plants but rather urges you to get out into the woods and hike and that's a very cool spin.

The Native Plant Podcast

Mike Berkeley of Growild Native Plant Nursery and landscape designer John Magee host the native plant podcast, interviewing horticulturists, designers, botanists, and other individuals in the field. I found the discussions with Larry Weaner and Thomas Rainer particularly important in my thinking. The Native Plant Podcast hosts are based in Tennessee and the mid-Atlantic area and I am often jealous of how much richer their areas are in native plant resources compared this plant-impooverished area of northeastern New Jersey (which doesn't have a single nursery with a large selection of native plants...even Jared and Rachel's nursery is over an hour away!).

Native Plants, Healthy Planet

Fran Chismar and Tom Knezick, the owners of the wholesale Pinelands Nursery in Southern New Jersey run this new podcast which has a specific mission of highlighting the work non-profit organizations are doing to restore habitats and bring back native plants, focussing on the New Jersey area.

[I took all the photographs in this piece at the New Jersey Conservation Foundation's magnificent Apsahwa Preserve in October 2019]