

DECEMBER 1-14, 2016 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES FOR EASTVIEW

By Dick Harlow

EIGHT REASONS **NOT** TO CLEAN UP YOUR GARDEN.

THIS IS A SUMMARY OF 'PRAIRIE NURSERY'S' EMAIL, with my occasional comments

"A garden is a natural system not a room in your apartment or house. A garden, if allowed, will be a home to natural wildlife that will benefit your garden and use your garden to sustain their life and to add to the next generation of garden plants and beneficial organisms.

If we truly are concerned about diminishing populations of pollinators and beneficial insects, you need to read the rest of this. More and more native plant gardeners of yard and gardens see their gardens as havens that support a host of our diminishing pollinators and other inhabitants. Our actions in the garden can either enhance or inhibit their lives.



Honey Bee, *Apis* species, on New England Aster, *Aster novae-angliae*, © Dick Harlow

1. BEES. Native bees, **Bumblebees** hibernate in your garden. They may overwinter in a rock crevice, under bark, or in a burrow. In spring they wake up and start constructing a new nest, and never return to the old ones. Piling mulch on the ground in fall inhibits the queen from building her nest. **Leafcutter Bees**, **Mason Bees** and **Yellow-faced Bees** will nest in the hollow stems of many native plants. Leaving your native plants standing over winter, and in the spring instead of cutting them all the way down, leave 12 – 15 inches of stalk stubble standing will allow for pollinator nesting sites.



Eyed Brown Butterfly, *Satyrodes eurydice*, on **Swamp Milkweed**, *Asclepias incarnata*, © Dick Harlow

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2. **BUTTERFLIES.** The declining butterfly populations are one of the best reasons not to clean up the garden. **Swallowtails**, the **Cabbage Whites** and the **Sulphurs** form a chrysalis in late summer and use dead plant leaves and stalks for hibernation. **Mourning Cloak** and **Eastern Comma** butterflies hibernate as adults in the plant litter. The **Red-Spotted Purple**, **Baltimore Checkerspot**, and **Meadow Fritillary** spend the winter as caterpillars rolled into a fallen leaf, or inside the seed-pod of a host plant. When we cut down and clean up our gardens, we remove overwintering sites for butterflies.



Jagged Ambush Bug, *Phymata americana*, on Buddlija, 'Black Night', waiting to ambush!
© Dick Harlow

3. **Predatory Insects.** Native **Ladybugs** (not the invasive Asian ones) enter hibernation soon after the temperatures drop and spend the winter under a pile of leaves or hidden under a rock. Native **Ladybugs** are known pest-eaters, each one consuming dozens of soft-bodied pest insects, like aphids, and insect eggs every day as do other predatory insects such as **Ambush Bugs**, **Lacewings**, **Damsel Bugs**. **Ground Beetles** spend the winter hibernating as either adults, eggs, or pupae. Predatory insects help control and maintain a balanced insect population. If you have a vegetable garden, predatory insects are your best friends.



American Goldfinch, Male on Cone Flower
© Dick Harlow

4. **Birds.** A yard scraped clean and bare gives the birds good reason to fly on by. A highly textured landscape signals a diversity of plants and better opportunity for food. Spent plants offer a safe place for birds to forage. In spring, the extra plant material means that there are more insects, and insects are a critical food source for nesting birds as they feed their young. All nestlings and young fledged birds need these insects. In the fall and winter the **seed-heads** offer food. Your native plants provide the right material, the right environment, and the right nutrition, just when the birds need them.

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Northern Red Salamander, *Pseudotriton ruber*,
© Dick Harlow

5. Toads and Salamanders. Amphibians are essential to the garden. Where do they overwinter? In spent plant material or in the ground, protected by the plants. What do they eat when they emerge? Insects!



Little Bluestem grass, *Schizachyrium scoparium*
'Blue Heaven' © Dick Harlow

6. Protection. Dead plants, and the snow they gather, add a layer of insulation that protects the plant root from harsh winter winds and sub-zero temperatures. The plants offer protection for themselves, the soil, and the critters that use the leaf and plant litter, as well as the birds that feed there. Wait until spring to cut down the plants and lay them on the ground as a mulch layer. For supporting life in the garden, and protecting the health of soil, your available leaves and spent plant material are better than wood mulch or bark chips.

7. Free Plants. When plants self-seed you have several options. You can let 'em grow –some plants have shorter lives than others, and the self-seeded plants will replace the old ones. You can remove some seedlings, and leave others to grow and fill-in as needed. Or, you can move the new seedlings to a different location entirely or share them with friends.

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Ice crystals on a shrub. The ice does not damage next years buds © Dick Harlow

8. Beauty. There is so much beauty to experience in a winter garden. **Seed-heads, leaves** and **stems** in brown, black and gold. Snow resting on dried **seed-pods** and **berries** clinging to bare branches. Frosted leaves and glittering grasses. Beauty makes us fall in love with our world and that's what gardening is all about."



Winterberry, dwarf, *Ilex verticillata* 'Red Sprite'
© Dick Harlow

CLIMATE CHANGE



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Can anyone truly deny climate change as the world watches melting sea ice that coincides with sea level rise, or a slowing of the gulf stream due to increased dilution by freshwater from the arctic? And an increase in dryness and drought in three major areas of the United States let alone the rest of the world? I live in Vermont by choice to get away from smog, high human habitation, pollution, and CO₂ emissions. I tend to think that most people would rather live safe than in peril.

I personally am more concerned for my children and grandchildren than for my generation. It is our generation that has been trying, struggling to do something about this problem. But, it has

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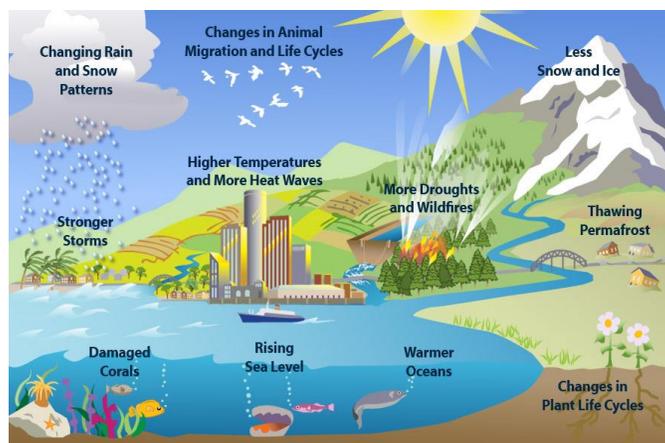
been a huge fight against deniers who use every tactic they can to confuse, deny truth, and support their own selfish political or economic agenda.

We tend to think locally rather than globally. People living on the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific are furthest from our thoughts when we either face water restrictions during a drought or not enough snow to keep the ski slopes open during the winter. Our thoughts and our economic concerns often times are local.

But, climate change affects the world, not just one part of the globe. Air currents in the Northern Hemisphere, above the equator, move from West to East in the Northern Hemisphere, and south of the Equator from East to West in the Southern Hemisphere. So what happens in China or Japan will eventually be felt in the United States West Coast and what happens in the US will eventually, in one form or another, be felt in Europe and Russia. Likewise, what happens in South Africa will be felt in South America

Recently we have read in the newspapers and on the internet how the northern part of the 1400-mile long Great Barrier Reef off the coast of Australia has died, how the coral has been bleached. Minimal life exists on that section of the reef. The Great Barrier Reef is the source of income and livelihood for many Australians, and yet they have been affected by what man has done in other parts of the world.

It is amazing to me that it has taken so long for people around the globe to realize we are in this climate change together for better or for worse. And, yet there are still deniers. One has to wonder, when science has proven without a doubt that global warming is occurring, in fact is a reality, what is the personal gain for those who are vocally denying it. I believe in the long run and to our peril, the deniers will be shown to be very short sighted.



Scientists-clues-print.jpg

OBSERVATIONS

MAMMALS

Coyote pack yipping
Coyote Scat, backyard
Gray Squirrel (3)
Eastern Cottontail
Meadow Vole

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Weather Tidbits

Month of DECEMBER 1-14, 2016

All Measurements taken at solar noon (1230 EST).

Overcast Days: 13

PRECIPITATION

Total Rain Precipitation: 2.6 mm or 0.1 inches

SNOW

Total Snow: 146mm or 5.7 inches Water content: 0.57 inches

TEMPERATURE

Mean Temp: 1.8 C⁰/35.2

High Temp: 16.1 C⁰/61.0⁰F

Low Temp: -13.7 C⁰/ 7.3⁰F

