

# MARTHA STEWART Living

## Swing Into Spring

100+ Smart Ways to  
Live Sustainably

**EGGS-TRAVAGANZA!**  
Stylish (and eco) ideas  
for a sweet celebration.  
See page 78.

**EASY HOLIDAY  
MENUS**

**THE BETTER  
BACKYARD**

**MARTHA'S  
FAVORITE EGG  
RECIPES**

**VEGETARIAN  
DISHES**

*Plus*  
**Daffodil Cake**

APRIL 2022  
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# INSTINCTS

In the suburbs of Philadelphia, a passionate landscape designer is transforming traditional cookie-cutter lawns into sustainable, low-maintenance havens that teem with life. Stroll through three of his projects, and learn how he's bringing wild beauty back to the neighborhood.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY NGOC MINH NGO | TEXT BY JENNIFER JEWELL



**GREENER GRASS**  
In landscape designer Jeff Lorenz's urban backyard, an upcycled-wooden-slat garden house sits in a no-mow sedge lawn alternative.





**SMART WATERS**

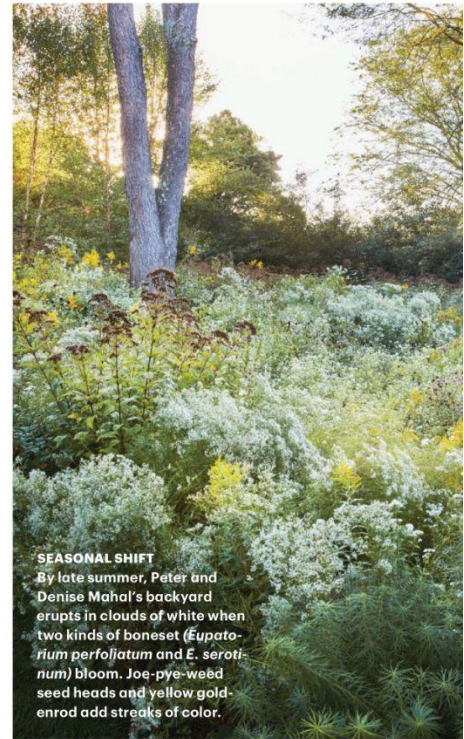
The native perennials in Lorenz's side garden are adapted to the region and need no additional irrigation. A permeable gravel and flagstone path helps absorb excess water from storms, which prevents flooding, a common problem in the area.



**G**REG AND CHRISTINE Van Zandbergen were not gardeners when they moved from Philadelphia to the city's Main Line in 2019. But the property they bought for their family in the dead of winter had a big surprise in store: an immersive native-wildflower meadow that wrapped around the entire house. It emerged their first spring there, and rolled out successive waves of flowers and foliage through the fall—just as Jeff Lorenz and his team at Refugia, a local landscape-design firm that specializes in native plants, had planned. That winter, when friends with conventional front lawns asked the couple if they were going to keep the meadow, they said they weren't sure—it depended on how much time, money, and upkeep it would require. Lorenz, who had helped coax the plot along all year, promised them it was low-maintenance and well worth the beauty and connections with nature it would provide. They decided to give it a chance.



**EYE-CATCHING OASIS**  
The Van Zandbergens' front yard is a sea of bright-yellow *Ratibida pinnata*, pale-purple and scarlet bee balm (*Monarda media* and *M. didyma*), and clouds of silvery mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*).



**SEASONAL SHIFT**  
By late summer, Peter and Denise Mahal's backyard erupts in clouds of white when two kinds of boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum* and *E. serotinum*) bloom. Joe-pye-weed seed heads and yellow gold-enrod add streaks of color.

Lorenz founded Refugia in 2015, determined to change people's perception of the suburban yard. There are more than 40 million acres of turfgrass across the U.S. today, much of them maintained by gas-powered mowers, watering systems, and synthetic fertilizers. This monoculture, a symbol of America since the mid-20th century, contributes to the decline in plant and animal biodiversity around the world. Instead of lawns, Lorenz cultivates local plants, or ecotypes, which he describes as "connected through evolution to the climate, geology, soil, and hydrology of their exact spaces." In other words, they're precisely as nature intended. His own yard in urban Narberth (shown on the previous pages) is a vibrant example: It has a diverse array of plants, from berries to blooms, that looks beautiful year-round, helps sequester carbon, and is adapted to endure increasingly extreme weather.

To monitor the impact of these important gardens, Refugia established its ecological Greenway Network—an



**SOARING SUCCESS**  
A regal native dogwood (*Cornus florida*) in the Mahals' front meadow attracts year-round and migrating birds. Below: Purple New England aster (*Aster novae-angliae*) mingles with Shenandoah switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*; 'Shenandoah').

interconnected group of more than 120 native-plant landscapes in the Philadelphia area. His first project was for Peter and Denise Mahal, a couple of bird lovers in leafy Berwyn (shown above and at right). Refugia layered in plantings to mimic the woodland that their subdivision likely removed, and six years later, mature trees invite songbirds to perch, tall shrubs serve as roosting sites, and groundcover and leaf litter provide safe spaces for sparrows to forage. In the fall, goldfinches start snacking on the seed heads of echinacea. The Mahals take it all in during walks on the meandering paths in their yard. "The garden completely transforms every few weeks," Peter says.

Ten miles away, the Van Zandbergens have embraced their un-manicured surroundings. Flowers, birds, and butterflies beckon their two tween daughters outside, and friends and even strangers stop by to see what's happening in the meadow. Greg gushes about its benefits, and visitors often leave with a bouquet picked by his girls. Now when people ask, "Will you keep it?" he answers with a smile and a sweep of an arm: "Isn't it obvious?"





1 | 2



3 | 4



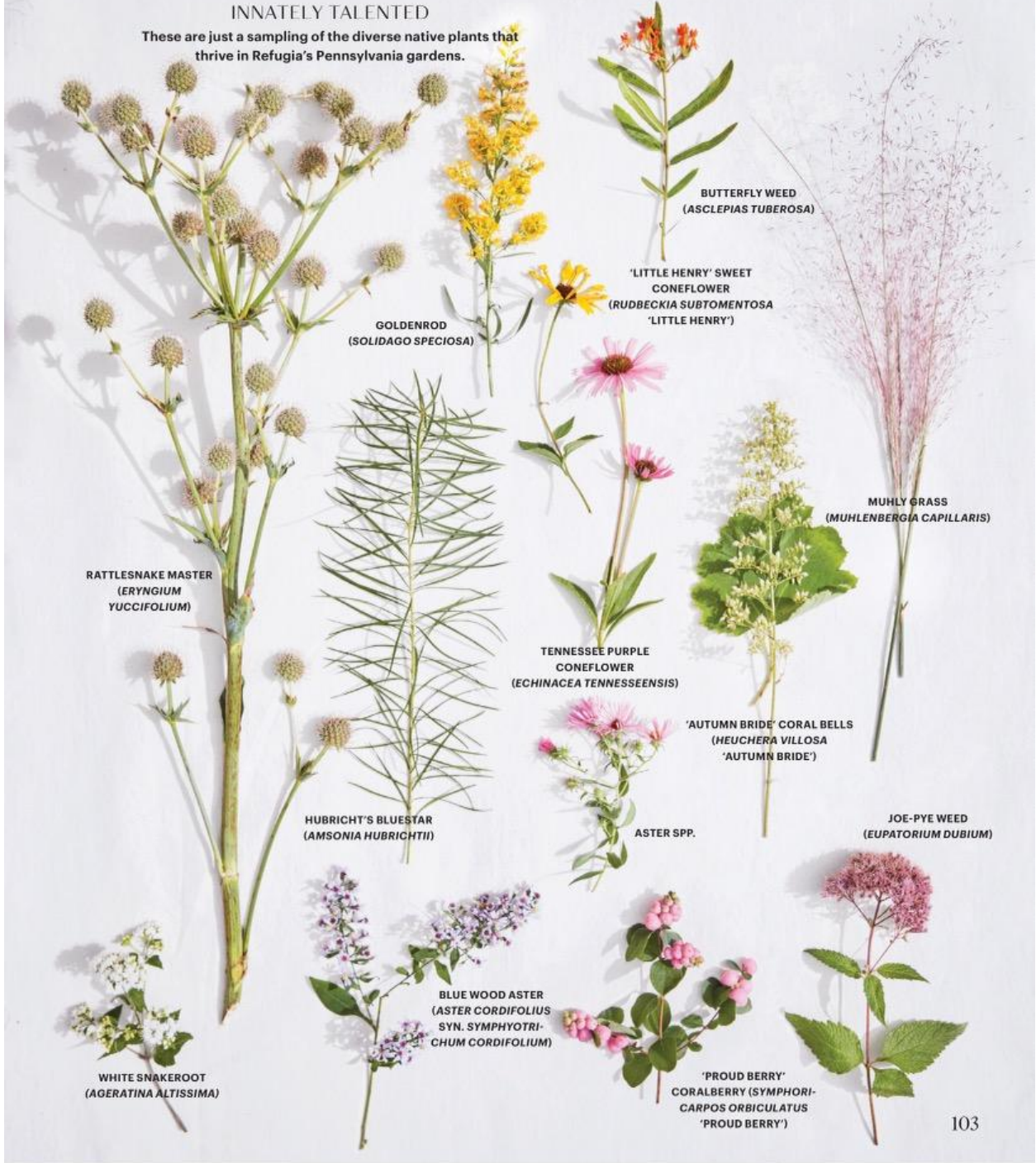
### SCENIC STOPS

1. Each Refugia Greenway Network garden features a sign identifying it as a space that is "restoring nature to neighborhoods."
2. A migrating monarch feeds at pale-purple bee balm (*Monarda media*) mixed in with bright prairie coneflowers (*Ratibida pinnata*).
3. Virginia mountain-mint flowers (*Pycnanthemum virginianum*) keep a honeybee busy.
4. Yellow wands of *Solidago rugosa* 'Fireworks' arch over blue mistflower (*Eupatorium coelestinum* syn. *Conoclinium coelestinum*).

ART DIRECTION BY RYAN MESINA

INNATELY TALENTED

These are just a sampling of the diverse native plants that thrive in Refugia's Pennsylvania gardens.



RATTLESNAKE MASTER  
(*ERYNGIUM YUCCIFOLIUM*)

GOLDENROD  
(*SOLIDAGO SPECIOSA*)

BUTTERFLY WEED  
(*ASCLEPIAS TUBEROSA*)

'LITTLE HENRY' SWEET  
CONEFLOWER  
(*RUDBECKIA SUBTOMENTOSA*  
'LITTLE HENRY')

MUHLY GRASS  
(*MUHLENBERGIA CAPILLARIS*)

TENNESSEE PURPLE  
CONEFLOWER  
(*ECHINACEA TENNESSEENSIS*)

'AUTUMN BRIDE' CORAL BELLS  
(*HEUCHERA VILLOSA*  
'AUTUMN BRIDE')

HUBRICH'S BLUESTAR  
(*AMSONIA HUBRICHII*)

ASTER SPP.

JOE-PYE WEED  
(*EUPATORIUM DUBIUM*)

WHITE SNAKEROOT  
(*AGERATINA ALTISSIMA*)

BLUE WOOD ASTER  
(*ASTER CORDIFOLIUS*  
SYN. *SYMPHYOTRI-  
CHUM CORDIFOLIUM*)

'PROUD BERRY'  
CORALBERRY (*SYMPHORI-  
CARPOS ORBICULATUS*  
'PROUD BERRY')