

## 2025 Pennsylvania Botany Symposium

### Instructors Bios • Friday November 14 Workshops

#### The Penn Stater Hotel & Conference Center

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**Sandra Budd** is a museum professional with experience in the curation and illustration of natural history content for exhibitions. Her scientific illustrations cover botany, entomology, ornithology, mollusk, and mammal studies. She produced a large landscape mural featuring biodiversity of Western Pennsylvania for the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, as well as fossil reconstructions of prehistoric life forms and 3-D models for their paleontology displays. She has been a member of the Guild of Science Illustrators for 15 years. She received her M.F.A. from Carnegie Mellon University and B.S. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Clarion University, PA.

**Emily Sessa** is the Patricia K. Holmgren Director of the William and Lynda Steere Herbarium at the New York Botanical Garden. She is a botanist whose research focuses on the ecology and evolution of ferns and lycophytes. She earned her B.A. from Cornell University in 2005 and her Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2012. She was a faculty member at the University of Florida from 2013-2022, when she moved to New York to join the NYBG Science leadership team. She continues to conduct research on fern systematics, historical biogeography, and responses to environmental change.

**Ron Lance** has held posts in land management, biology, forestry, botany and horticulture since 1975. He served on the Board of the International Oak Society for 12 years and has authored and co-authored numerous publications dealing with native woody plants of the Southeastern U.S., including *Woody Plants of the Southeastern U.S., a Winter Guide* by the University of Georgia Press and *Pyracantha* in *Flora of North America*, volume 9. His interest in hawthorns has yielded 15 separate publications on *Crataegus*.

**James Lendemer** is a scientist and educator whose career has focused on the interconnectedness of lichens, forests, ecosystem health and more generally biodiversity conservation. Much of his work has focused on eastern North America, including the physiographic regions that converge in Pennsylvania, where he is from. He is the Curator of Botany at the New York State Museum, part of the New York State Education Department. He has authored and coauthored several hundred peer-reviewed scientific papers, identification manuals and field guides. At home in rural Columbia County, New York he is an avid outdoorsman with a passion for conservation, natural history and public land.

**Cheyenne Moore** is the Pennsylvania Plant Conservation Alliance Coordinator. After earning a B.S. in Biology from Dickinson College, Cheyenne received her M.S. in Biology from Bucknell University where she worked on conservation and genetics of Pennsylvania's threatened, rare, and endangered plant taxa. After working on invasive species ecology with the Carnegies Museum of Natural History and University of Pittsburgh, she accepted her current position as PPCA Coordinator with the PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources and the PA Natural Heritage Program. In this role she facilitates the conservation of Pennsylvania's globally rare, threatened, and endangered plants.

**Noah Yawn** Noah Yawn is an ecologist with the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program at the WesternPennsylvania Conservancy. He received a B.S. in Integrative Biology and a B.S. in Geology from Auburn University (Auburn, AL), where he worked on species demography research of three

southeastern endemic species, a geochemical analysis of the Ketona Dolomite (famed for hosting over 8 endemic vascular plant taxa in central Alabama), and has contributed to a variety of floristic publications documenting plant diversity in the southeast. At PNHP, Noah conducts plant community vegetation sampling and documentation, ecological assessments, and rare species inventory and monitoring. He is passionate about highlighting the importance of geobotany, the intersection of geology and plant ecology, and furthering others' appreciation for an often-overlooked component of our natural history.

**Peter Zale** holds a Master's degree and Ph.D in plant breeding and genetics (2009, 2014) from The Ohio State University and is currently Director, Conservation Horticulture and Collections, at Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, PA. In this position he leads the plant exploration, breeding, and conservation programs through a combination field, garden, and laboratory-based activities. His main efforts at Longwood have centered around development of a comprehensive conservation horticulture program focused on native orchids and rare native plants of the U.S. In his spare time, he has been creating a private botanical garden with extensive collections of native plants with an emphasis on rare species. In 2024 he was awarded the Philip E. Keenan Award by the American Orchid Society in recognition of contributions made to native orchid conservation.

### **Consulting Botanist's Toolkit Instructors**

**Tim Block** retired from his position as John J. Willaman Chair of Botany at the University of Pennsylvania's Morris Arboretum in January 2025. Dr. Block taught Field Botany and Plant Systematics at Penn, and numerous classes and workshops on various topics in botany each year for nearly 30 years. Dr. Block is co-author with Dr. Ann Rhoads of *The Plants of Pennsylvania* (2000 & 2007), *Trees of Pennsylvania: A Complete Reference Guide* (2005), and *Aquatic Plants of Pennsylvania: A Complete Reference Guide* (2011), all published by University of Pennsylvania Press.

**Hope Brooks** is PennDOT's DCNR Environmental Reviewer. Prior to taking this position, Hope worked at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center in Edgewater, Maryland for 10 years doing wetland ecology, rare plant work, orchid ecology research, and mycorrhizal fungi studies. Hope is a graduate of Penn State College of Agriculture with a degree in Plant Sciences, and she attended the University of Pittsburgh for graduate studies in Ecology. In her spare time, Hope can either be found underground exploring caves across PA, VA, WV, TN, AL, GA, and NM or going on botanically-minded adventures.

**Alex Dogonniuck** is an Ecological Information Specialist and has been conducting PNDI environmental reviews for PA DCNR since 2018, covering projects in the eastern half of the state. Alex received his B.S. in Environmental Biology from the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

**Bonnie Isaac** is the Manager of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History Herbarium in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and President of the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania.

**Greg Podniesinski** has been the DCNR Director of the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program since 2008. He has been with the Natural Heritage Program since 1998, first as a plant community ecologist involved in a number of vegetation mapping and plant community classification projects and later as the coordinator for the Natural Heritage Program's ecology, botany and zoology staff, prior to becoming program Director. Greg works out of the Bureau of Forestry's Conservation Science and Ecological Resources Division in Harrisburg and is the Chief of the Natural Heritage Section.

**Jeff Polonoli** is currently a Project Environmental Specialist for a Pittsburgh-based environmental consulting company. He specializes in ecological investigations, including wetland delineations, rapid assessments, vegetation mitigation and monitoring, and botanical surveys. Mr. Polonoli has over 30 years' experience as a field botanist and has conducted various ecological investigations and botanical surveys within Illinois, Ohio, New York, North Carolina, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Maryland. Throughout his botanical career he worked as an herbarium technician, field botanist for The Nature Conservancy, and acting curator of collections for Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens.

**Jason Ryndock** has been conducting PNDI review for PA DCNR since 2012, focusing mostly on projects in the western part of the state. During this time, he also completed surveys and updated records of both plant and invertebrate species of concern. Jason is a graduate of Millersville University and received his M.S. in Biology from the University of Mississippi. In his spare time, he enjoys gardening with native plants and photography.