

Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour

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2024 online and in-person Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour and

Green Home Features Showcase the Electrified Home Tour, and the Native Plant Resource Teams

Executive Summary

Overall

- 227,442 garden visits have been made since the Tour's inception in 2005.
- The Tour's YouTube channel has nearly 4,000 subscribers, contains 123 videos on gardening with native plants, and had more than 92,000 views in the last year.

Online Garden Tour—April 6 and 7, 2024

- The two-day online Tour offered 10 hours of content on gardening with California native plants in the East Bay.
- More than 300 viewers watched the Saturday program, and more than 200 watched the Sunday program.

In-person Garden Tour—May 4 and 5, 2024

- 7,352 garden visits were made on the weekend of the Tour. (A torrential downpour that lasted most of Saturday, May 4, depressed the number of visitors that day.)
- 99% of those who filled out the in-person Tour evaluations rated the in-person Tour "Excellent" or "Good."
- 60 gardens were open on the week-end of in-person Tour.
- More than 79 hosts and 193 volunteers made this event possible.

- 48 garden talks and demonstrations were given during the in-person Tour.
- 55% of registrants who filled out the evaluation said they had changed their gardening practices because of the Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour.

Electrified Home Tour—Sunday, March 10, 2024

On Sunday, March 10, 2024, from 11:00-3:00 the Tour held its first-ever Electrified Home Tour.

- 482 visits were made to the four electrified homes that were open on this Tour. These four homes could all be entered.
- More than 30 hosts and volunteers staffed this event, so visitors would be easily able to get their questions answered. Volunteers included architects, solar panel experts, contractors, and generalists who were able to answer questions about electrification and green home features.

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2024 Final Report

A nine-year study of water use, green waste generation, maintenance hours, and maintenance labor costs between a traditional garden and a California native plant garden was conducted by the City of Santa Monica between 2004 and 2013.
The results of this study showed that the native garden used 83% less water; generated 56% less green waste, and required 68% less maintenance hours than the traditional garden.

From the City of Santa Monica's garden/garden study

Why a Native Plant Garden Tour?

The spring 2024, Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour was held in order to showcase pesticide-free, water-conserving gardens that provide habitat for wildlife, reduce solid waste, and contain 70% or more native plants.

The tour enlists local residents to demonstrate by example that seasoned and novice gardeners can garden with good results without the use of synthetic chemicals, and with minimal supplemental water, while providing food, shelter, and nesting areas for wildlife. The gardens on this tour show that it is possible to implement sustainable garden practices and still have beautiful places for people to relax in and enjoy.

Why California natives? Once established in the garden setting, California native plants need little or no summer water, as they survive naturally with only fall-to-spring rainfall. In addition to being water-conserving, California natives are hardy, and they don't require the use of pesticides and fertilizers, as many non-natives do. Native plants need less pruning than many non-natives, such as lawn, ivy, or cotoneaster, thus generating less green waste. As this article, "The Chickadees Guide to Gardening" demonstrates, native plants also provide the best habitat for birds, butterflies, beneficial insects, and other forms of wildlife.

A nine-year study of water use, green waste generation, maintenance hours, and maintenance labor costs between a traditional garden and

a California native plant garden was conducted by the City of Santa Monica between 2004 and 2013.

The results of this study showed that compared to a traditional garden, the native garden:

- uses 83% less water
- generates 56% less green waste, and
- requires 68% less maintenance

Tour gardens contain minimal or no lawn. This is of particular value since the majority of the chemicals purchased by home owners support lawn care, and the majority of water used in home gardens is applied to lawns. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, homeowners use up to ten times more chemical pesticides per acre on their lawns than farmers use on crops. In addition, half of the water used by the average household is applied to the landscape—with most of that water being used to keep turf green.

2024 Online Garden Tour

This year, for the third time, the Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour was held both online and in-person. Inspirational speaker Doug Tallamy was the keynote speaker for this year's online Tour.

The ten hour-long online Tour took place on Saturday and Sunday April 6 and 7, 2024. More than 300 viewers watched the Saturday program, and more than 200 watched the Sunday program. 98% of the people who submitted evaluations rated the Tour "Excellent" or "Very Good."

The recording of the online Tour has been uploaded to the Tour's YouTube channel. The videos on this year's Tour will receive more exposure over time:

- the Tour's YouTube channel has nearly 4,000 subscribers, contains 123 videos on gardening with native plants, and had more than 92,000 views in the last year.
- 97% of the people who submitted evaluations rated the online Tour "Excellent" or "Very Good." Below are comments taken from online Tour evaluations:

Comments taken from online Tour evaluations

- Doug Tallamy is incredibly inspirational and motivating.
- The Native Plant Resource Teams are a great idea: what great resources!
- These presentations are amazing for their organization, excellent photos, valuable information, and technical finesse.
- I've heard a lot of academics give presentations and I am very impressed by the high quality of the presentations on the Virtual Garden Tour. All presenters were on top of the technical aspects of Zoom presentations (which is often a problem). Everyone was organized, spoke well, stayed on track, and presented useful information. I was glued to my screen.
- The talks complement the in-person experience well!
- Thank you! It was inspiring.
- This program is a local treasure, and we are so fortunate to have it in the Bay Area.
- Thank you so much for this extraordinary two days of native plant presentations. I can't wait to get into my garden! I am armed with new information and enthusiasm for continuing to garden according to the principles that were discussed this weekend. Each and every one of you did an extraordinary job of presenting! In addition to the garden talks, I wasn't expecting to enjoy or get so much information about electrifying homes. The surprise to me is that I'm now ready to do it because so much was presented and prepared so well and explained so that I could understand what to expect. I will be taking the first step of looking for a stove next week! You are all amazing! Thank you again and rest well until you do your in-person tours.
- This is wonderful information, enjoyable, inspiring, and a great public service all rolled into one!
- Really great presenters!
- Excellent as always.
- Totally fabulous.
- I loved all of the presentations. Thank you so much!
- I really appreciate ALL the work that everyone puts into these programs, and admire the skills, dedication, and zest for doing so.
- Always educational, informative and inspiring.
- Kathy, thank you so much for your dedication to promoting biodiversity and mitigating climate change. Everything related to "Bringing Back the Natives" is of such high quality. You've surely been an inspiration to many people. I wish continued success for the program. Many thanks for your work!
- I really appreciate all of the information my husband and I have gained from the Tour. We are gradually transforming our garden to natives and BBTN has been a tremendous resource. The information on the importance of native plants to help wildlife, the environment, and climate issues ties in nicely with the importance of electrification.

- This is wonderful information; enjoyable, inspiring, and a great public service all rolled into one! Looking forward to future offerings on gardens and green homes. I learn new things every time.
- Before seeing the Tour's retrospective, I wasn't aware of the extent of the national and state recognition of the events lead by Kathy Kramer. If only legislation could follow with solutions.

In-person Garden Tour

This year was the 20th annual Tour. For the third time, the in-person Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour was a two-day event, with Bayside gardens (Pinole to Hayward) open on Saturday, May 4, and Inland gardens (Martinez to Livermore, including Lafayette and Moraga) open on Sunday, May 5.

7,352 garden visits were made on the week-end of the 2024 in-person Tour. (A torrential rain that lasted most of Saturday depressed the number of garden visits that day considerably.) See the end of this report for a list of the number of visitors counted at each garden.

227,442 garden visits have been made since the Tour's inception in 2005.

The [sixty gardens](#) open on the in-person Tour were located in twenty-four cities and unincorporated areas in Alameda and Contra Costa counties. The cities were: Alameda, Albany, Antioch, Berkeley, Castro Valley, Clayton, Concord, Danville, El Cerrito, Hayward, Lafayette, Livermore, Kensington, Martinez, Moraga, Oakland, Piedmont, Pinole, Pleasant Hill, Richmond, San Leandro, San Ramon, San Pablo, and Walnut Creek.

A variety of gardens were featured on the tour. The gardens ranged from large lots in the hills to small front gardens in the flats, mature landscapes to those that were newly-planted, and they contained everything from local native plants to the horticulturally available suite of natives from throughout California. About half of the gardens (29) were designed and installed by owners, and the remainder (31) were designed and installed by professionals. The gardens were landscaped with at least 70% native plants.

190 volunteers and 79 hosts were stationed at gardens on the day of the tour, or helped with tour preparation and clean-up. The

volunteers contributed more than 850 hours of time to the tour. The hosts put in countless hours preparing for the tour, and more than 800 hours on the day of the event.

Comments taken from in-person Tour evaluations

- I have been attending the tour for years and it just gets better all the time. I love that you are including green homes into the tour as well.
- I went on the tour a few years ago and this winter I converted my lawn to a mix of natives and lower water plants. I found the tour very interesting and helpful.
- The very highest compliments. Wonderful gardens. Delightful & enthusiastic people hosting and attending. Very well organized and planned. It's wonderful how native gardens are increasing in the Bay Area, and are involving gardeners in more and more towns.
- This Tour was over the top!
- The tour seems to get better and better each year anyway! I would just say keep up the great work! I look forward to this every year!
- This tour is always amazing. It is well-organized and gets better every year. Way to go on the keystone species signs! Congratulations! Thankful for all of you at the helm and for the homeowners and gardeners who allow us in.
- Wonderful organization, great instructions and email communication.
- The tour was very well designed, organized and delivered. Very special. Thank you!
- I can't imagine it being any better- we had a terrific time, truly - surprised by how lovely the homes are.
- The planning and communication for the tour is excellent.
- The tour is so amazing.
- I appreciate the handouts that were provided by many homeowners and the website with all the information available to help transition to including more native plants in my yard.
- Thanks for all the hard work. The tour is always inspiring and informative.
- I love the variety of gardens, and speaking with other native plant enthusiasts. As a landscape designer I'm always looking for great plant combinations that I can incorporate into my work.
- Thank you to all that helped make this event possible. it was so great for a beginner to get knowledge about landscaping/ gardening/ design/ maintenance. It was a complete picture. Thank you.
- It was great! Loved the super helpful and kind volunteers.
- My husband and i really enjoyed the tour. I liked the variety of gardens. i also liked how everything seemed so attainable.
- We love the Bringing Back the Natives tour! It inspires us year after year!
- Thank you so much for doing this. You've inspired and educated so many people!

- I love this tour. I look forward to it all year! It's so fun to visit other gardens and collect ideas. It's especially a joy to visit local gardens with the same soil types and struggles. Thank you, thank you!
- Just a lot of gratitude for this awesome event.
- Thank you for your hard work on this. It's such a great service to the community and we are so so grateful! The tour is one of my favorite events of my year.
- I appreciate the addition of the tours of electrified houses. All of the volunteers and hosts were fabulous!
- Fabulous job. Generous owners.
- Wonderful. Wonderful. Wonderful.
- Great! changing the world!
- Thanks for a great opportunity to learn about California natives.
- Thank you so much for organizing this event. And thank you to all the garden stewards and volunteers. I plan to buy a heat pump water heater in the next 2 years, based on what I learned Saturday, and hope to transition to a heat pump heater, dryer and a convection stove when I can.
- Please thank all of the participating gardeners for being out in the rain!
- Appreciate the friendliness and enthusiasm of the owners and volunteers. Everyone is very approachable and eager to answer questions. The labeled plants very helpful.
- My husband appreciated being able to discuss upgrading our solar panels and adding a back-up battery with professionals on-site.
- Thank you for all your hard work in organizing this valuable event!
- Fantastic!!
- I appreciated the information and tour of homes that have totally electrified.
- So fabulous. Each garden unique and fun! Thanks.
- I love these tours, whether virtual or in person. Thank you so much for doing both. The virtual tours provide insight to the planning, identifications, and ideas for the gardens. And then, there is nothing like being immersed in person to the feel of the actual gardens and environment they provide.
- Great idea to incorporate electrification. These tours have been amazing, so informative and helpful. Thank you for all the hard work!

Electrified Home Tour

- 482 visits were made to the four electrified homes that were open on our first Electrified Home Tour, which ran from 11:00-4:00 on Sunday, March 10, 2024. All of these homes could be entered by registrants.

- 96% of the people who filled out the evaluation rated the Electrified Home Tour “Excellent” or “Good”.
- 82% of the people who completed an evaluation said they felt more motivated / prepared to electrify their home.
- 65% of respondents said “I will consider replacing some gas appliances even before they “burn out”; 19% said, “I plan to replace all gas appliances/equipment as soon as possible.”
- More than 30 hosts and volunteers staffed this event; we had plenty of volunteers to ensure that visitors could easily get their questions answered. Volunteers included architects, solar panel experts, contractors, and generalists who were able to answer questions about electrification and green home features.

The participating homes were:

[Kathy Kramer and Mike May's home](#) in San Pablo (138 visitors)

[Anne Chambers and Ed McAlpine's fully-electrified home](#) in Moraga (136 visitors)

[Janet Parks' home](#) in Kensington (128 visitors)

[Stefanie Pruegel's fully-electrified home](#) in San Leandro (80 visitors)

Comments taken from Electrified Home Tour Evaluations

- Electrifying may be easier than I thought.
- Inspired by the environmental benefits, appreciated seeing improvements in a house similar to ours.
- Seeing actual devices installed as opposed to catalogue pictures was helpful.
- The personal stories and help finding rebates were motivating.
- Seeing some of the appliances in operation and how they worked was helpful. Was especially impressed with the induction stove.
- Now that I can see the end results with these electric houses, I can now prioritize the steps I need to take.
- The tour clarified choices for heat pump water heaters, sizing & ductwork/connections for HVAC systems.
- Appreciated seeing the appliances and features and being able to ask questions of the homeowners.
- Quit Carbon was a wonderful connection. Rebates are confusing and they said they can help. Offered feedback for my electrical panel needs.
- It was helpful to understand the terminology and see the products in use. I was confused about the heat pump HVAC versus heat pump water heater, and now it seems clearer.
- I liked the induction stove top and am considering it!

- It was great to connect with Cooper from Quit Carbon. He was very helpful and patient with my questions, and I would hope that I could contact him in the future when I am ready to do the next step towards a heat pump heating system.
- It was invaluable to me to talk to the homeowner regarding their experience with a contractor I have been considering. Based on their information I will move forward with the project.
- Electrifying feels more doable / achievable after seeing how others have done it.
- There is nothing like seeing early adopters showcase what they have done. Super informative and inspiring!
- It was great seeing how motivated and positive the hosts and volunteers were when sharing their experiences.
- The very knowledgeable volunteers, and the open conversations with volunteers and other registrants were really helpful.
- The Tour was well-designed. Contractor / product flyers were available. Residents were friendly. The pre-tour information online was very helpful.
- The combination of native gardens and electric options was great. Having people there to explain options was helpful.
- Seeing the electrified houses was wonderful.
- It was inspiring to see a home similar to mine "electrified".
- The bidet, induction stove and the heat pump were interesting, and it was helpful to see them in person.
- It's doable! Really, really enjoyed talking to people who have done it and those who are in the planning stages.
- Loved seeing the heat pump, stove top, bidet and all the wonderful native plants, The Tesla roof was very impressive.
- Talking to homeowners about their experiences was inspiring.
- Seeing and discussing actual installations, and having architects and contractors available to answer questions was terrific.
- Real world conversions in real homes that are not new was inspiring.
- I loved talking about induction cooking and native plants with the homeowners.
- I met wonderful people who were also visiting. A recommended contractor's name came up again and again. Nice. Grateful the owners opened their homes. Great kindness.
- I learned about the difference between separate and stand-alone heat pump water heaters and the advantages/ disadvantages of each. I got clarification on the terminology of "heat pumps" (eg "heat pump HVAC vs heat pump water heater). It was a bit confusing at first! The landscape designer (Chris) at the Moraga house was very helpful in providing gardening tips.
- Kensington owner's connection to his EV to run the house, lots of native plant ideas, and water storage in San Leandro were interesting and inspiring.

- It was motivating just hearing how enthusiastic people are about this stuff.
- Great signage, wonderful folks who could answer questions about all aspects of the garden and electrification. Well staffed!
- I enjoyed seeing the home and talking to the homeowners, and Quit Carbon person. Also talking about native plants with like-minded folks.
- The homeowners' expertise, talking with other guests and landscapers, and most important, visually viewing how it was done was inspirational.
- It was so helpful that when I checked in at the home of Chambers/McAlpine, I was handed a three-page summary of their electrification projects. This information included date, scope, cost, product, contractor. This information reduced the crowd of visitors around the homeowner asking the same questions. Made for a more relaxed atmosphere and more efficient exchange of information.
- You provided a lot of information up front!
- It was great to talk to the homeowners - to get an understanding of the actual experience, rather than company promotional brochures.
- The hosts were generous not only in sharing their homes, but in providing information on how everyone else can electrify, too.
- You planned and executed an excellent tour :)
- The homes I visited were so organized, and had such helpful information! It was easy to take photos and then ask specifics of volunteers and owners.
- Appreciated the great detail and photos online of what each home had to offer. Installers, costs, dates. Very useful so could do some research ahead on products and companies.
- I thought it was very well done and am grateful to the owners for opening up their homes.
- Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Native Plant Extravaganzas

The Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour now also holds spring and fall Native Plant sales. Three Extravaganza's were held in the fall of 2023, and four were held in the spring of 2024. Participating nurseries are East Bay Wilds, the Watershed Nursery, Oaktown, Annie's Annuals, and Green Thumb Works.

Native Plant Resource Teams

A new program, the [Native Plant Resource Teams](#) (NPRT), has been started to help connect people who are interested in native plants. Teams have formed by geographic area (Berkeley/East Bay, West Contra Costa County, and the Tri-Valley area), as well as by interest area.

So far more than 500 people have joined the Teams: they're interested in creating pollinator pathways, sharing seeds and plants, encouraging their city officials to incorporate more native trees into the urban landscape, meeting with other native plant fans, and more. Team members have met in each others' gardens and at parks, held pruning and seed and plant exchange workshops, and are planning a number of upcoming fun and informative events. These included:

- Holding three Native Seed Sharing and Plant Exchange workshops (in San Leandro, San Ramon, and Livermore), a native plant pruning workshop (Livermore), and a "Garden with Nature" workshop in San Leandro.
- Coordinating two online presentations on how to get native gardens incorporated into communal living situations, such as HOA's, and condo, townhouse, and apartment complexes. These presentations can be viewed [here](#) and [here](#).
- Holding field trips to native plant nurseries, including Native here in Berkeley, the California Landscape Nursery in Marin, Larner Seeds, in Bolinas, and California Flora Nursery in Fulton, as well as trips to the Tilden Botanic Garden, the Hallberg Butterfly Garden in Sebastopol, Home Ground Habitats in Novato, and restoration projects, such as the Skyline Gardens Restoration Project, among others.
- Team members translated the Keystone Species signs into [Spanish](#).
- Numerous Zoom meetings of the Pollinator Pathways and Native Street Trees were held.

Website

The Tour's website featured the gardens on this year's Tour under "[View the 2024 In-Person Gardens](#)." Each garden is described in detail, and its plant list is provided, as are numerous photographs of each garden.

The website also contains information and photographs of all of the gardens that have ever been on the tour, under "[Find a Garden](#)"; this section contains extensive garden descriptions, plant lists for each garden, and some garden-specific bird, butterfly, mammal, reptile, and amphibian lists. By typing in the name of a city, all of the gardens that have ever been on the Tour from that city will appear in the results box.

The gardens can also be searched by 25 other factors, such as rain garden, professionally designed, small garden (600 sq. ft. or less), natives in a parking strip, slope, shady garden, great bird garden, and more.

Resource information on the website includes contact information for landscaper designers who specialize in creating native plant gardens (“[Find a Designer](#)”), lists of nurseries that carry native plants (“[Find a Nursery](#)”), a list of Easy-to-Grow East Bay Natives, and a list of keystone species—hardy plants that provide the best habitat for wildlife, according to Dr. Doug Tallamy.

Tour Partnerships and Sponsors

The Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour has created partnerships with a variety of organizations that share common values—that chemical-free and water-conserving gardening preserves water quality and quantity, and creates wildlife habitat. The list of major sponsors and supporters of the 2024 Tour include a flood control and water conservation district, two county clean water programs, four water districts and water conservation agencies, four cities, three non-profits, two fish and wildlife commissions, and several businesses. The list of tour sponsors is provided below.

Sponsors of the 2024 tour

\$16,500

Contra Costa Clean Water Program

\$10,700

Saving Birds Through Habitat

\$10,000

Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District

\$7,500

Clean Water Program Alameda County

\$5,800

Alameda County Fish and Game Commission

\$5,500

Contra Costa Water District

\$4,300
Contra Costa Fish and Wildlife Committee

\$4,000
California Native Plant Society, East Bay Chapter

\$3,000
Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency

\$2,500
Brian and Jennifer Dirking

\$2,000
EcoPerformance Builders

\$1,500
City of El Cerrito
City of Pittsburg

\$1,250
RecycleSmart

\$1,000
Alameda County Water District
City of Antioch
City of Walnut Creek
Quit Carbon
Zone 7 Water Agency

\$500
Anne Chambers and Ed McAlpine
Anonymous
League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany, Emeryville
Livermore Municipal Water
Pacific Horticulture
Glen and Connie Schneider
The Summer-Dry Project

Host Gardeners

The gardens selected to take part in the tour are chemical-free and water-conserving landscapes that provide habitat for wildlife and contain 70% or more California native plants. Hosts were chosen because of their willingness to be on-site on the day of the tour to talk with visitors about their gardens, and their enthusiasm for, and commitment to, educating others about how to garden in environmentally sustainable ways.

Host gardener recruitment began in the spring of 2023 for the 2024 tour. Potential candidates completed an application, and applicants who met the criteria received a site visit.

Host's gardening experience ranged from native plant novices to professional landscape designers. All of the host gardeners were good ambassadors for natural gardening techniques.

Comments from Host evaluations

- The tour does an excellent job of inspiring people to garden with natives. Many of our visitors commented that they were inspired to do natives now that they could see the many plant choices they have and how beautiful a native garden can be.
- People on the tour always seem very inspired and encouraged by what they see. The clearly appreciate hosts opening their gardens and homes and all the organizing happening for the tour.
- Lots of folks say they've been inspired when they're leaving.
- The tour is very inspiring to people: we met many people who are planning their own native plant gardens and are looking for inspiration and advice. People wanted to know about plants that are specific to their gardens / area.
- The Tour helped me become a native gardener.
- This tour does a great job of inspiring people to garden with natives.
- The tour does a great job of inspiring people. The keystone species signs, in particular, are fabulous.
- I talked to every one of the 216 people who came through our garden and gave them printed brochures and handouts that explained the importance of creating habitat, the decrease in water used in the garden (the Santa Monica study chart), and our elimination of pesticide use.
- The bluebirds in the front yard birdhouse hatched ON TOUR DAY so everyone got to watch the parents flitting in and out with caterpillars.
- Folks were very interested in our green home features photo display.
- The water-resistant keystone species signs are fabulous!

- I had amazing conversations with people all day long. I may not be able to speak again for a few days!
- Kathy's thorough, clear, and timely emails, materials, and instructions for the hosts and volunteers made the experience of being a first-time host easy and fun. The process of obtaining and returning materials was also easy and fun - great that Kathy turns these into social events and opportunities to tour her home and garden. We lined up our own friends as volunteers and they remained in high spirits despite Saturdays' rain, which made the tour joyful for me. Glen Schneider's talk was terrific and engaging: I observed smiles and nodding all around.
- The keystone species signs are excellent.
- The keystone species signs reiterate the big message of gardening for nature.
- I loved the keystone species signs and found them attractive and informative. They added a lot of educational value. I wouldn't want to do the tour without them.
- Everyone seemed really happy and interested in native plants.
- It was a great crowd and a lot of fun! I was very moved by the whole experience, and grateful to be included.
- I'm super grateful for learning about the importance of gardening from you and for the opportunity to help evangelize. So many people are exposed to native gardens with this tour—as a result, the tour has done so much for wildlife. When I started showing my garden through the Tour I was almost the only host in my area; now many gardens in my area have showcase native gardens! This is because of your work! And with the electrified home element, you are doubling the interest and environmental impact to thousands. You are very good at inspiring us homeowners/volunteers to want to be a part of the Bringing Back the Natives environmental education team - good job, Kathy! On a personal note, urban wildlife around my home – the creatures whose lives have changed since I built a native garden/pond, and maintain it well, with the tour's encouragement, thank you, too.
- The tour was well organized, as always, with great support for the hosts. I am so very glad that you are continuing to put on the tours, both virtual and in-person!!! They are both so important! Thank you for all of time, effort and care that you devote to them.

Behavior Change

55% of those who filled out the evaluation said they had changed their gardening practices because of the Tour.

Number of Garden Visits Made

2024 Tour Gardens and Number of Visits Made

	AM visits	PM visits	Total garden visits	Visits to electrified homes (allowed inside)	Visits to all electrified homes
Bayside Gardens					
Alameda					
Cheryl and Brandon Chi	20	17	37		37
Albany					
Beatrice and Bjorn Hori	12	64	76		
Scott Richerson	42	76	118		
Debra Shushan	10	60	70		
Berkeley					
Nancy Beckman and Tom Bickley	54	189	243		243
Sallie Bryan	45	80	125		
Leslie Buck	25	110	135		
Tom and Jane Graly	44	176	220	220	220
The Hillside Club	15	63	78		
Keith Johnson and Erin Diehm	50	172	222		222
Donna Mandel and Ken Jacobs	44	176	220		
The Pollinator Pathway	10	68	78		
Ruth Rogow	17	70	87		
Dave Savidge and Jennifer Braun	20	73	93		93
Castro Valley					
Mary Cooper	1	37	38		
Cecelia and Steve	18	38	56		56

Danny Galindo & Eugene Shabelyanau	37	61	98		98
Cindy and Richard Simons	15	37	52		52
Susan and Bill Teefy	22	70	92		
El Cerrito					
Pamela Fox	17	50	67		67
Michael Graf	35	69	104		
Hayward					
Natalie Forrest	14	30	44		
Toku Hankins and Keegan Pham			155		
Josh and David	14	41	55		55
Miriam Schalit	5	16	21		21
Kensington					
Janet Parks	24	73	97	97	97
Oakland					
Sherene Arjani	32	82	114		
Carol Baird and Alan Harper	27	68	95		
Denise Bergez and Caleb Cushing	21	101	122		122
Robert Finkel	29	77	106		
Barbara Gansmiller	28	77	105		
Lorraine Mann	35	68	103		103
Kathy Simon and Susan Lubeck	39	78	117	117	117
Mary Ann Walsh and Richard Carter	23	43	66		66
Piedmont					
Valerie Matzger	45	81	126		
Pinole					
Kim and Jeff Jerge	24	32	56		

Jen and Rolland Mathers	26	25	51		51
Richmond					
Anita Periera	17	44	61		
Debbie Rheuark	12	19	31		
Jocelyn and Peter Rohan	21	49	70		
San Leandro					
Stefanie Pruegel	12	49	61	61	61
San Pablo					
Melody Esquer Gil	5	22	27		
Inland Gardens					
Antioch					
Laura Kindsvater	37	13	50	50	50
Clayton					
Nancy Niemeyer	68	59	127		
Concord					
Juan Pablo Galvan Martinez	106	125	231		231
Danville					
Maria Sargent	50	123	173		
Lafayette					
Glenn Phillips and David Nish	124	120	244		244
Livermore					
Laura Cornett and Brad Buehler	57	44	101		
Maria and David Dawson	82	103	185		185
Carol and Jeff Garberson	83	133	216		216
Carol and Don Hardesty	103	137	240		

Jennifer Hurley and Dan Gaff	118	122	240		240
Martinez					
John Muir National Historic Site	28	34	62		
Nancy Salsig	64	83	147		
Moraga					
Anne Chambers and Ed McAlpine	102	99	201	201	201
Pleasant Hill					
Christine Meals	112	132	244		
San Ramon					
Susan Friedman			219		
Diane Griffiths	57	110	167		167
Lorraine Kalich	98	124	222		
Walnut Creek					
Lainie Johnson	120	171	291		0
Totals	2415	4563	7352	649	3315

Appendix A

Doug Tallamy article: "The Chickadee's Guide to Gardening"

OPINION: NY Times, March 11, 2015

The Chickadee's Guide to Gardening By Douglas W. Tallamy

March 11, 2015

I GREW up thinking little of plants. I was interested in snakes and turtles, then insects and, eventually, birds. Now I like plants. But I still like the life they create even more.

Plants are as close to biological miracles as a scientist could dare admit. After all, they allow us, and nearly every other species, to eat sunlight, by creating the nourishment that drives food webs on this planet. As if that weren't enough, plants also produce oxygen, build topsoil and hold it in place, prevent floods, sequester carbon dioxide, buffer extreme weather and clean our water. Considering all this, you might think we gardeners would value plants for what they do. Instead, we value them for what they look like.

When we design our home landscapes, too many of us choose beautiful plants from all over the world, without considering their ability to support life within our local ecosystems.

Last summer I did a simple experiment at home to measure just how different the plants we use for landscaping can be in supporting local animals. I compared a young white oak in my yard with one of the Bradford pears in my neighbor's yard. Both trees are the same size, but Bradford pears are ornamentals from Asia, while white oaks are native to eastern North America. I walked around each tree and counted the caterpillars on their leaves at head height. I found 410 caterpillars on the white oak (comprising 19 different species), and only one caterpillar (an inchworm) on the Bradford pear.

Was this a fluke? Hardly. The next day I repeated my survey on a different white oak and Bradford pear. This time I found 233 caterpillars on the white oak (comprising 15 species) and, again, only one on the Bradford pear.

Why such huge differences? It's simple: Plants don't want to be eaten, so they have loaded their tissues with nasty chemicals that would kill most insects if eaten. Insects do eat plants, though, and they achieve this by adapting to the chemical defenses of just one or two plant lineages. So some have evolved to eat oak trees without dying, while others have specialized in native cherries or ashes and so on.

But local insects have only just met Bradford pears, in an evolutionary sense, and have not had the time — millennia — required to adapt to their chemical defenses. And so Bradford pears stand virtually untouched in my neighbor's yard.

In the past, we thought this was a good thing. After all, Asian ornamentals were planted to look pretty, and we certainly didn't want insects eating them. We were happy with our perfect pears, burning bushes, Japanese barberries, porcelain berries, golden rain trees, crape myrtles, privets, bush honeysuckles and all the other foreign ornamentals.

But there are serious ecological consequences to such choices, and another exercise you can do at home makes them clear. This spring, if you live in North America, put up a chickadee nest box in your yard. If you are lucky, a pair of chickadees will move in and raise a family. While they are feeding their young, watch what the chickadees bring to the nest: mostly caterpillars. Both parents take turns feeding the chicks, enabling them to bring a caterpillar to the nest once every three minutes. And they do this from 6 a.m. until 8 p.m. for each of the 16 to 18 days it takes the chicks to fledge. That's a total of 350 to 570 caterpillars every day, depending on how many chicks they have. So, an incredible 6,000 to 9,000 caterpillars are required to make one clutch of chickadees.

And chickadees are tiny birds: just a third of an ounce. What if you wanted to support red-bellied woodpeckers in your yard, a bird that is about eight times heavier than a chickadee? How many caterpillars would that take?

What we plant in our landscapes determines what can live in our landscapes. Controlling what grows in our yards is like playing God. By favoring productive species, we can create life, and by using nonnative plants, we can prevent it.

An American yard dominated by Asian ornamentals does not produce nearly the quantity and diversity of insects needed for birds to reproduce. Some might argue that we should just let those birds breed “in nature.” That worked in the past, but now there simply is not enough “nature” left. And it shows. Many bird species in North America have declined drastically in the past 40 years.

Fortunately, more and more gardeners are realizing that their yards offer one of the most empowering conservation options we have, and are sharing their properties with the nature around them.

By the way, you might assume that my oak was riddled with unsightly caterpillar holes, but not so. Since birds eat most of the caterpillars before they get very large, from 10 feet away the oak looked as perfect as a Bradford pear.

Douglas W. Tallamy, a professor of entomology and wildlife ecology at the University of Delaware, is the author of “Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife With Native Plants.”

A version of this article appears in print on March 10, 2015, on Page A25 of the New York edition with the headline: The Chickadee’s Guide to Gardening.