

ARE LAWN & GARDEN CHEMICALS SCARING YOU?

Vinnie Drzewucki, CNP

Editor's Note: SSAS member Vinnie Drzewucki is the Horticultural Information and Marketing Specialist at Hicks Nurseries Inc. He is also a New York State Certified Nursery Professional and a founding member of the Long Island Organic Horticulture Association (L.I.O.H.A.).

Is the use of toxic chemicals around your lawn and garden scaring you and your family to death? There are safe alternatives available. The recent concerns over the suspected health and environmental risks posed by pesticides and their use have caused many Long Islanders to reexamine the use of traditional products and pesticides around their homes and gardens. Many landscape gardeners, arborists, retail garden centers, and others in horticultural businesses have begun to recognize these concerns and are now moving toward providing safer alternatives, such as incorporating the use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) methods and least toxic alternative products.

At Hicks Nurseries Inc. on Jericho Turnpike in Westbury, we have a long tradition of helping our friends and neighbors here on Long Island with safely maintaining carefully manicured lawns, landscapes, and flower and vegetable gardens. We now specialize and carry an extensive selection of "Family-Safe" and "Least-Toxic Alternative" lawn and garden products or, as we like to refer to them, "remedies." In fact, we received a high score on the Neighborhood Network's Pesticide Alternatives Project survey, high enough to be a recommended source for Family-Safe Alternatives. At Hicks, there's a "Family-Safe" and "Least-Toxic Alternative" remedy for just about any lawn and garden problem.

Listed below are some of the many products we carry and feel confident in recommending as environmentally safe alternatives for use around home lawns and gardens. You'll notice that the term *organic* is often not used in the description of many of the products. This is because some products are not truly organic, but are derived from naturally occurring mineral sources or are made from synthetic (man-made) organics. The term *organic* is somewhat controversial among professionals and amateurs alike, and no one definition has been decided and agreed upon by all yet. However, those products listed below are considered by us to be least-toxic alternatives for controlling certain pest problems around the home lawn and garden without harm to the environment or wildlife when used properly and according to label directions. Although we carry all the products listed below, these products are widely distributed and sold throughout Long Island and should be fairly easy to find at any quality local garden center or retail nursery.

Soil Amendments/Enhancers

Beneficial Microbial Inoculants — add beneficial soil

microbes like bacteria, fungus, and yeast that convert soil elements into usable forms of plant foods to stimulate plant growth. Beneficial soil microbes also help provide control of fungal disease problems.

Compost — adds organic matter, beneficial microorganisms, and nutrients to the soil for improving soil structure and water-holding capacity, and feeding plants. Provides valuable trace elements.

Gypsum — adds calcium (a trace element nutrient) to soil and temporarily improves drainage by loosening clay soil.

Lime — raises soil pH (neutralizes acidity) and adds calcium to soil. Maintaining proper soil pH ensures nutrients in the soil are readily available and easy for plants to absorb and use. Very important for the health and vigor of all plants.

Organic Fertilizers — feed lawns and gardens slowly and over a long period of time. Enhance and stimulate beneficial microbial activity in soil, helping to release naturally occurring nutrients and improving soil conditions. Provide valuable trace elements.

Professional Soil Conditioner (Profile) — 100% natural porous ceramic particles that are incorporated into soil to improve drainage and aeration while reducing and preventing soil compaction, enhancing plant growth and health.

Physical/Mechanical Controls

Sticky Barriers (Tree Tape) — applied around tree trunks and shrub trunks to prevent damage from gypsy moth caterpillars, black-vine weevils, and other crawling insects.

Sticky Traps — flat, bright yellow cards coated with a sticky substance that lures and traps flying plant pests like whiteflies, aphids, thrips, and fungus gnats, killing them without using toxic pesticides.

Traps — used to lure and trap certain types of insects, often used for monitoring purposes and reducing populations. Traps use pheromones (sex scents) and food scents to lure insects. Most commonly available are: pantry moth traps, gypsy moth (male adults) traps, Japanese beetle traps, and hornet and wasp traps.

Biological Controls

Bacillus thuringiensis (BT) — a bacterial disease that attacks the digestive systems of certain insect pests, but is harmless to humans, pets, and beneficial insects. Usually used to control caterpillars, mosquito larvae, and Colorado potato beetles.

Beneficial Insects — insects that feed on other insects that damage plants. Insects controlled include aphids, scales, mealybugs, whiteflies, and mites. Beneficial insects are available for a limited time during May and June, and include ladybugs and praying mantis.

Beneficial Nematodes — microscopic predatory worms that destroy insect larvae that live in soil, such as grubs and larvae of black-vine weevil and fungus gnats, to name a few. They are harmless to plants, humans, pets, and beneficial insects.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Jackie Richichi

SSAS welcomes this month's new members. We hope that you'll become active members of our very active chapter — join us at a meeting, weekly bird walk, or special event.

[To receive an application for membership in National Audubon Society and SSAS, please call our Membership Chairperson, Jackie Richichi, at 631-691-1855, or send e-mail to Jacee13@aol.com. Introductory membership is \$20; \$15 for students and senior citizens.]

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|------------------------|--|
| Baldwin | Elizabeth Bass, Debbie Lucas, Margaret & Arnold Marden |
| Bellmore | Rudolph P. Riesz |
| Bethpage | Salvatore Audia |
| East Meadow | John Runyan |
| Farmingdale | Ann M. Irvin, James Mason |
| Franklin Square | Joan C. Drowne |
| Freeport | Lester A. Sobel, Adolf Weinstock |
| Garden City | Patricia & Daniel Odell |
| Hewlett | Richard Bowen |
| Levittown | Paula Clayton, Mr. & Mrs. Charles Fritz, GERALYN Geiser |
| Malverne | Andrea Koufis |
| Massapequa | Claire Houser |
| Merrick | Mr. & Mrs. Ira J. Marks, J. I. Rindler |
| Oceanside | Michael Ernst, Charles Liebov |
| Plainview | Anne N. McCaffrey |
| Rockville Centre | Arthur Browne, Monique Remy |
| Valley Stream | Enid R. Klein |



DOODLETOWN ROAD IN WINTER

Betty Barowsky

Many of you are familiar with the trail that goes past the old abandoned community of Doodletown, which is in the northeastern part of Bear Mountain State Park. It is a wonderful hiking trail, not too strenuous, with some historic interest, since one can still see the basements and stone steps of some farmhouses. Overgrown orchards are still there and still produce fruit, and there are two cemeteries tucked away in the woods. But Doodletown Road is of special interest because it attracts numerous species of migrating warblers in the spring.

Several warblers (most notably the Hooded Warbler) nest there and you can generally count on seeing Indigo Bunting and hearing and/or seeing many thrushes. In particular, you can frequently hear Wood Thrushes (pictured). This year we decided to take a winter hike in Doodletown, and see what the bird life is like in the off season. We went when the ground was covered with snow, the top forming an icy crust where the sun had partially melted it.



By far the most common birds were White-throated Sparrows. They were energetically looking for edible material on the ground, and slipped and slid over the thin ice cover of the snow. But they didn't seem to mind all that, and continued scratching where they could.

Over the past few years, we have noticed a few Pileated Woodpeckers in Doodletown. We've heard their pecking, and seen the characteristic holes in the trees they routinely visit. Their pecking (hammering is a more apt description) is unmistakable. It sounds like someone chopping wood. To my great surprise, we heard them on our winter hike. Somehow I thought they would be migrants. But as per the map section of my field guide, it turns out that indeed they *can* be found in the winter in the Bear Mountain area.

Right across the road from the entrance to the Doodletown Road trail is a wetlands area called Iona Island, which is designated as a sanctuary. In the warmer weather this is an area that is very rich in wetlands species. And now, with the resurgence of Bald Eagles during the winter months, the section of the island that borders the Hudson River has been designated a Bald Eagle sanctuary. While we saw no eagles, we saw many Marsh Hawks (a.k.a. Northern Harriers), Dark-eyed Juncos, Song Sparrows, and Red-tailed Hawks.

So although the spring is the most exciting time for birding, the winter can be wonderful also. Dress warmly, and be ready for surprises.



Explore the coast
with the

AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY

NEW YORK AQUARIUM (Saturday, April 1). Meet at 10 A.M. (no foolin') for a 2-1/2 hour special "Behind the Scenes" tour of the many indoor/outdoor exhibits. See walrus, sea otter, stingrays, sharks, and, of course, "Squirt" the Wonder Clam. Visit Discovery Cove and Sea Cliffs exhibits. Cost: \$15 (kids \$8). Leader: Bob Cummings. Call Don.

FIRE ISLAND "SUNKEN FOREST" (Saturday, May 20). Meet at 10 A.M. at the ferry in Sayville for day trip to unique maritime forest on Fire Island. Hike the mile long boardwalk trail during peak spring bird migration. Cost: \$20 includes round trip ferry and guided hike. Bring lunch and binoculars. Leaders: Nancy Corona and Steve Finn. Call Nancy at (718) 318-8827.

ASSATEAGUE NATIONAL SEASHORE (May 18-21). Enjoy a wildlife bonanza on the Virginia coast. Hike trails of Chincoteague Refuge and beaches of Assateague National Seashore during peak spring bird migration. See wild ponies, Sika deer, river otter, bald eagle, shorebirds, and many species of warblers and other songbirds. Cost: \$275 includes 3 nights at Refuge Motor Inn, Safari Bus Tour of back dune flats, boat tour of marshes, guided hikes, evening programs, and "All-you-can-eat" seafood buffet on Saturday night. Leaders: Mickey Cohen and Don Riepe. Call Don.

For information and free field trip brochure,
call/write Don Riepe, (718) 634-6467,
28 West 9th Road, Broad Channel, NY 11693

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Betsy Gulotta

Thanks to the continued generosity of Evelyn Bishop, South Shore Audubon Society will be awarding two \$750 Jerry Bishop Environmental Scholarships to students who are college juniors, seniors, or graduates and who are continuing their studies towards a degree in biological or environmental sciences, such as wildlife management, forestry, animal behavior, ecology, marine biology, oceanography, mammalogy, ornithology, etc. For information, call me at 572-7575 (daytime) or 546-8841; the deadline to apply is **April 7th**.

YOUR PART IN MOSQUITO CONTROL, PART II

Jackie Richichi

It's time again to start thinking about those mosquitoes. Although another outbreak cannot be guaranteed, *Culex pipiens* mosquitoes that carried the West Nile encephalitis could have survived the winter. The mosquito bears the virus for life.

According to the 12/11/99 issue of *Science News*, the virus has shown up in a stray cat's tissues, domestic geese, chickens, a Cooper's Hawk, a Sandhill Crane, a pigeon, and a House Sparrow. Not all of the 23 bird species that contracted the virus last year showed symptoms, but an

estimated 98% of the several thousand American and Fish Crows that were infected died. West Nile encephalitis killed 7 of the 60 people who were diagnosed, 9 of 23 horses, and a variety of Bronx Zoo birds, including a Snowy Owl, Bald Eagle, and flamingos.

I know these are scary statistics, so I am asking once again for your help to control the population of mosquitoes. Here are the tips from last November's article:

- ✦ Empty birdbaths daily
- ✦ Empty plant pots and saucers
- ✦ Empty any pails that hold water
- ✦ Watch for water on pool covers
- ✦ Keep an eye on those kiddie pools
- ✦ Check boat canvas
- ✦ Watch for clogged gutters that hold stagnant water
- ✦ Put fish in your garden ponds!

Remember that *Culex pipiens*, a.k.a. the common house mosquito, breeds in fresh stagnant water. Their larvae resemble that of an inch worm, brownish in color. They will try to avoid being seen by hiding under leaves in water or wiggling down to the bottom.

Your effort to control house mosquitoes is not only for our protection, but for the protection of our wildlife.

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 Wood, Metal, Plastic
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To find Hicks Nurseries: No. State Pkwy: Take Exit 32. Follow sign to Old Westbury. Go north on Post Ave. left on Jericho Tpke. Hicks Nurseries is on the left. L.I.E. (from NYC): Exit 39S. Go right at 3rd light on service rd. onto Old Westbury Rd. Turn left at 1st light (Jericho Tpke.). Hicks is on the right. L.I.E. (from Suffolk): Exit 40W onto Rte. 25 west. Go west 2 miles. Hicks Nurseries is on the left.

DUCK SURVEY VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Since February of 1989, SSAS Duck Survey Chairperson Joe Grupp has spent one or two Saturdays every wintertime month counting ducks in 28 locations from Valley Stream to Massapequa Park, with Paul Butkereiit doing the same at 10 locations in southwestern Nassau. The data being collected by their teams provides essential and unprecedented information about the populations of every duck species wintering on our lakes and ponds.



Joe is looking for volunteers interested in spending a few hours or a full day viewing and learning about our waterfowl.

If you're interested, please call him at 481-4208. Duck surveys will be held on **Saturdays, February 26th and March 25th**, rain or shine.

On February 5th, Joe counted 5000 ducks on icy ponds and also saw 27 Great Blue Herons (pictured).

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EDITOR'S BOOK LIST

Joanne's article about our upcoming Caleb Smith trip reminded me that I've been meaning to include a list of paperbacks I own that describe many of our area's parks. All of these cover Caleb Smith (I've omitted several statewide and NYC-only books I have that don't) and three invite readers to hike with SSAS:

① *Exploring the Other Island: A Seasonal Guide to Nature on Long Island* by John L. Turner (1994; organized by season, flora, and fauna, not by location)

② *Nature Walks In and Around New York City* by Sheila Buff (1996; covers 40 places including 9 on Long Island)

③ *New York Wildlife Viewing Guide* by Frank Knight (1988; briefly covers 76 places statewide, including 12 on Long Island)

④ *A Seasonal Guide to Bird Finding on Long Island* by Howard Barton 3rd & Patricia I. Pelkowski (published 1999 by ECSS: Sweetbriar Nature Center, which is a 54-acre preserve in Smithtown; covers 45-52 places per season)

⑤ *Short Nature Walks on Long Island* by Rodney & Priscilla Albright (now in its Sixth Edition; I've got the Fifth from 1996, which covers 52 places)

⑥ *Walks and Rambles on Long Island* by Alice M. Geffen & Carole Berglie (1996; covers 30 places)

OFF TO COURT FOR BROOKSIDE

On February 4th, SSAS and John Fischer, the president of the Long Island chapter of Trout Unlimited, filed suit against Nassau's County Executive and Legislature, and Water Works Realty Corp. We're contending that the lame-duck County Legislature failed to follow the State Environmental Quality Review Act and also that it needed to get the State Legislature's approval when it sold an emergency access easement through Brookside Preserve in Freeport to Water Works Realty for \$750.

The developer intends to erect a maximum-size multi-story nursing home right up to the southern border of the Preserve and to convert the woods on the east bank of Milburn Creek into parking spaces. This is the first time SSAS has filed a lawsuit; VP Michael Goldsmith is our pro bono lawyer.

APPLY FOR AN AUDUBON CAMP SCHOLARSHIP

This year, SSAS will be awarding two full scholarships, one to an adult and one (the Marion Yavarkovsky Youth Camp Scholarship) to a child age 10-14, to attend an Audubon camp this summer in Maine. Applicants or their parents should be members in good standing and be interested in sharing their camp experiences with fellow members, the community, and/or schools; we typically get only a few applicants, so apply! Financial need is not a basis for receiving a scholarship; the winners must provide their own transportation. Please contact our Education Chairperson, Suzanne Lancer (536-6574 between 7 and 9 P.M.), for details; applications are due **March 15th**. The following descriptions come from National Audubon's brochure; see SSAS's web page for a link to info on all of Audubon's camps and their programs.

The Audubon Camp in Maine, on Hog Island, includes original homestead buildings; rustic, yet comfortable, accommodations; and great food. Established in 1936 and located just 60 miles northeast of Portland, the camp remains a cozy haven amidst an evergreen paradise that seems a million miles from the urbanized workaday world.

Audubon Youth Camp. At the Audubon Camp in Maine, a sense of wonder prevails. Young people ages 10 to 14 learn about themselves, about nature, and how they relate to their natural environment. Participants learn by doing — if we talk about something, we'll also see it, feel it, touch it, experience it.

The primary aim of Audubon's Youth Camp is to instill a love, respect, and sense of stewardship for the natural world. While working toward this goal, we hope to aid your child in acquiring the knowledge and skills to understand the environment. The faculty consists of dedicated science educators who have a proven knowledge of the natural world as well as a strong background working with middle school-aged youth. The camper-instructor ratio of

5 to 1 and the enrollment of 50 campers creates a warm, personal atmosphere. The curriculum is wide ranging and includes marine biology, oceanography, geology, forest ecology, ornithology, and pond life.

Campers hike through cathedral-like spruce-fir forests, search for organisms in tide pools, and learn about sea-birds, seals, and other wildlife while exploring Muscongus Bay by boat. The evenings are filled with night hikes, stargazing, cooperative games, and campfire programs. This experience is designed to stay with these camp graduates and illuminate the course of their lives for a very long time to come. The Youth Camp is held July 26-August 6 and August 9-19.

Adult Scholarship. This year, the adult scholarship winner will get to choose from the following: Hog Island Ornithology (offered June 11-17, June 18-24, June 25-July 1, and Sept. 4-10), Natural History of the Maine Coast (July 9-15), Nature Through Photography (July 16-22), and Marine Life Explorations (also July 16-22).

• **Hog Island Ornithology Sessions.** Our program emphasizes the biology and conservation of colonial nesting seabirds and neotropical migrants, especially wood warblers. Field trips will visit seabird nesting colonies, freshwater and saltwater marshes, and coastal beaches, as well as forests.



Field trips are supplemented by lectures and discussions about breeding biology, migration, and bird song, as well as birding techniques such as backyard bird gardening and photography. We'll stress field identification and biology as we

tour Muscongus Bay, visiting nesting colonies of Atlantic Puffin (pictured), Roseate Tern, Black Guillemot, gulls, and eiders.

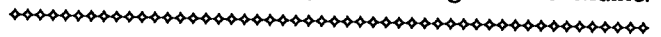
• **Nature Through Photography.** Join Mark Warner and John Green, nationally recognized nature and wildlife photographers and teachers, exploring the beautiful and subject-rich Maine coast through the lens of your camera. Personalized instruction and assessment of photography skills are provided during classroom, laboratory, and field elements of the program.

This workshop will feature sessions on composition basics, shooting sessions, processing and mounting slides, closeup photography, filters, metering, flash, and use of reflectors. Each participant will travel on field trips guided by experienced Audubon naturalists. There will be opportunities to photograph an Osprey nest close-up and/or a large harbor seal colony basking ledge.

• **Natural History of the Maine Coast.** Daily classes explore island, marine, forest, and estuarine general ecology in one of the most pristine maritime environments in the East. Seasoned instructors, highly skilled in a variety of subject areas, will guide you through a week of boat

cruises, island hikes, field explorations, slide presentations, evening discussions, and more. From weather to whales, from brittle stars to the Big Dipper, from seaweed to seabird, this session will awaken your senses and deepen your knowledge and appreciation for your place in the natural world.

• **Marine Life Explorations.** Muscongus Bay's rich marine ecology is unveiled by a team of instructors who will help you bring the underwater world to life. Field excursions such as tide pool investigations, hand netting, and bottom sampling will supply the living touch tank and other aquariums. Laboratory studies, classroom activities, and topical evening slide presentations and videos round out this exciting new camp offering geared toward the beginner and experienced person alike. Teachers are encouraged to attend. Learn the intricacies of an organism's life cycle as well as the broader web of life extending throughout Muscongus Bay into the larger Gulf of Maine.



HELP SAVE UNDERHILL

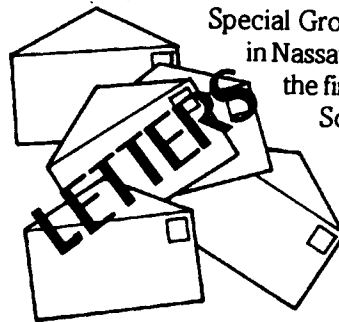
Elliott Kutner urges everyone who hasn't already done so to send letters regarding the Underhill property in Jericho to the following:

Roger Tilles, 7600 Jericho Turnpike, Woodbury, NY 11797;

County Executive Thomas S. Gulotta, 1 West St, Mineola, NY 11501; and

Governor George E. Pataki, Executive Chambers, Albany, NY 12224.

Here's a summary of the situation: The 96-acre Underhill property, 81 acres of which are owned by Tilles Investment Company (who recently leveled three acres before being ordered to stop), consists of rolling hills, woodlands, and kettle ponds. Underhill is one of two state-designated Special Groundwater Protection Areas



in Nassau County because it sits atop the first federally designated Sole Source Aquifer, and is one of seven Long Island sites targeted for protection by New York State's Open Space Conservation Plan. In 1996, the Town of Oyster Bay settled a decade-

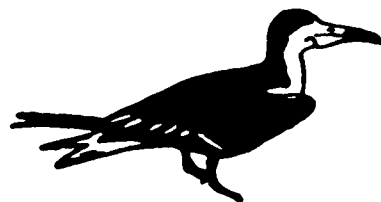
old lawsuit by Tilles by agreeing to the development of 270 houses, a clubhouse, a swimming pool, and four tennis courts at Underhill. That settlement resulted in civic groups (SSAS is now a member of the Society to Preserve Underhill) suing both Tilles and Tobay for failing to comply with the State Environmental Quality Review Act; the civic groups won their suit last year, but Tilles has appealed. Letters are needed to urge Tilles to sell the property and to urge Gulotta and Pataki to use Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act and other environmental funding sources to preserve it.

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