

# Live Free and Dig

## with the Littleton Garden Club

*Charlie Nardozzi at Sugar Hill*

THE LITTLETON COUR  
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2

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Littleton Garden Club

Back in September, an interesting talk was delivered by garden speaker Charlie Nardozzi. It was sponsored by the Sugar Hill Improvement Association and held at the Sunset Inn.

His gardening talk was on: Natives, Invasives and Weeds.

Charlie Nardozzi is a garden writer, speaker and radio and television personality. For 30 years he's shared horticulture knowledge. His appearances at flower shows, conferences and speaking engagements have taken him to many of the 50 states. He's the author of six books and has three radio shows in

New England. Charlie has a popular regular TV segment on WCAX Burlington called "in the garden".

Also, he leads garden tours around the world. He had just returned from a fall trip to Denmark and Sweden. They visited renowned gardens and castles in those countries.

### Natives

He is passionate about trying to grow native plants and produce gardens that invite pollinators.

Charlie mentioned some native plants in our area. They are chokeberry, cranberry, foamflower, fall aster and monarda (bee balm). We also have many "nativars". An example of that is some

of the colorful hybrid varieties of the purple cone flower (*Echinacea*) that are available. 'Firebird' is a bright orange coneflower that is an example of a nativar that I grow in my own garden and have seen butterflies on the blossoms.

One concern about growing adequate natives is the nutritional benefits they offer animals. Fat content of native plants can be higher than in non native material. That can be extremely important for migrating birds. The extra fat may improve a bird's endurance for long sustained flights.

One native that is treated in a cautionary manner is poison ivy. Well known as very

toxic. The berries are an important bird food source though and spread by bird droppings.

He mentioned poison ivy, when grown on the edge of a forest area, can form a protective wind break for birds. Poison ivy on a residential property poses a dilemma with pros and cons to consider.

### Invasives

Charlie reminded the audience of how some native plants are invasive.

One invasive he spoke of is Wild parsnip. That plant also has some toxic characteristics.

He relayed a personal story of how the toxic sap can cause fairly extreme blistering on the skin surface.

I learned about Japanese Knotweed from his discussion. It grows in wet areas. The roots and stems can be a problem. This plant can lie dormant for up to 20 years. Sometimes after localized flooding it returns and spreads wildly. It is a true invasive

### Weeds

Nardozzi reminded the audience that one constant in a garden is a weed. A weed is defined as being any undesired plant. It is something every gardener contends with. Some "weeds" may be desirable to some. For example, White Clover is a plant that grows in many lawns. It is green and stays low. It also is a legume that fixes nitrogen in the soil. It actually helps the lawn to stay green. It also is a pollinator plant. So, to some it may be a weed, but it truly is beneficial to many country type lawns. Charlie suggested "mowing high" to allow clover flowers to flourish and be beneficial to bees.

Weeds spread in two ways: Rhizomes or seeds. He suggested that bigger wood chips as a mulch can be a better means to stop weeds.

He noted that the most common weed: dandelion can actually be a signal of a change to a lawn's health. Compacted soil can lead to increased dandelions. Another common weed is Crabgrass. It produces up to a million seeds per plant. There is a pre-emergent herbi-

cide for that. It is a corn gluten herbicide that works pretty effectively.

It was an interesting dialog and slide show for local garden enthusiasts.

Many thanks to the Sugar Hill Improvement Association for providing such an accomplished garden speaker. This event was a free talk for the community and thoroughly enjoyed.

There is a lot of gardening information available at Charlie

Nardozzi's Web site, <https://www.gardeningwithcharlie.com/>. I have signed up for his newsletter that comes via email and find it quite interesting.

For more information about our club or our meetings, visit: <https://www.littletonnhgardenclub.org/>.