

Definitions of Commonly Used Terms as used by WOMV

What is an ecosystem? “An ecosystem is the combination of an interacting community of living organisms and their physical environment, functioning as an ecological unit in a given place. The operative word in this definition is ‘interacting’.” Doug Tallamy, *The Living Landscape*, pp. 106

What is biodiversity? “Biodiversity is the variety of life. It can be studied on many levels. At the highest level, one can look at all the different species on the entire Earth. On a much smaller scale, one can study biodiversity within a pond ecosystem or a neighborhood park. Species diversity is only one part of biodiversity. To properly catalog all the life on Earth, we also have to recognize the genetic diversity that exists within species, as well as the diversity of entire habitats and ecosystems.” National Wildlife Federation from <https://www.nwf.org/en/Educational-Resources/Wildlife-Guide/Understanding-Conservation/Biodiversity>

What is “native”?

There is no agreed-upon definition, but we use this one.

“A plant or animal that has evolved in a given place over a period of time sufficient to develop complex and essential relationships with the physical environment and other organisms in a given ecological community.” Rick Darke and Doug Tallamy, *The Living Landscape*, P. 93

What is a cultivar? What is a nativar?

“A cultivar is a clone or seed strain selected for a particular trait or traits. It’s written capitalized, unitalicized, and in single quotes, i.e., *Trillium grandiflorum* ‘Rosalie’. William Cullina, *Wildflowers*, P. 6

Note: “Nativar” indicates that it’s a cultivar or hybrid of a native plant.

What is a “weed”?

A weed is a plant (native or non-native) that is not valued in the place where it is growing. The term reflects people’s goals for their land but has no ecological meaning. Common Usage

Alternate Definition: Any plant that poses a major threat to agriculture and/or natural ecosystems within the United States. USDA

What is an invasive plant?

“A plant that is both non-native and able to establish on many sites, grow quickly, and spread to the point of disrupting plant communities and ecosystems.” USDA

What is a naturalized plant?

“A non-native plant that does not need human help to reproduce and maintain itself over time in an area where it is not native. Notes: Even though their offspring reproduce and spread naturally (without human help), naturalized plants do not, over time, become native members of the local plant community.” USDA

Note: Different organizations may use other definitions. WOMV has chosen to use the definitions compiled by Janet Allen of HGCNY (Syracuse chapter of Wild Ones.)

