

CONGRATULATIONS TO 2023 ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION AWARD WINNERS

BY KRISTINE FALLON, ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION GROUP

The Beverly Shores Environmental Restoration Group (ERG) congratulates Nancy Garrity and Mary Szpur, 2023 winners of the Environmental Restoration Award. This award is for Beverly Shores property owners who make inroads in invasive species removal and encourage the growth of native plants. ERG knows that individual property owners' stewardship is essential to restoring environmental balance in Beverly Shores. We want to recognize those who, like Nancy and Mary, make that effort. By sharing their story, we also hope to inspire others to follow suit. See more about the Environmental Restoration Award at ERG's website: www.bserg.org

When Nancy and Mary bought their house on Siesta in 2017, they inherited a yard planted to the residential landscape standards of 40 years ago, featuring what were then considered attractive, low maintenance plants. Today, most of those plants are considered invasives. Mary and Nancy discovered this by reading one of Terry Bonace's articles in *Sand Tracks*. In 2018, they asked Terry for advice and five years later are still working to implement his suggestions.

They prioritized removal of the large non-native invasives, particularly bush honeysuckle (*Lonicera spp.*) and burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*). The property "featured" a large bush honeysuckle that screened the house from the street. They replaced this with a native redbud tree (*Cercis canadensis*). Redbuds are understory trees we see blooming a vivid pink every spring and can grow to 20–30 feet. Redbuds can be multi-trunked and have a spreading habit, so provide good screening. They are also highly deer resistant.



Kristine Fallon, Nancy Garrity, Mary Szpur, Terry Bonace, Candice Smith admiring the redbud tree



Native redbud replaced invasive bush honeysuckle.

Other deer-resistant native trees and shrubs: serviceberry (*Amelanchier spp.*), red osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), wild currant (*Ribes spp.*), sand cherry (*Prunus pumila*), fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatica*) and chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), replaced invasive honeysuckles, burning bush, Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) and privet (*Ligustrum spp.*) throughout the property.

The lot is ringed by tall trees. That means shady areas, always a challenge for native gardeners. Ferns are a good solution and Mary and Nancy added two native varieties: ostrich fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*) and sensitive fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*). Other shade choices were small woodland natives that bloom in spring, including: columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), jack in the pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*), wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*), and sharp-lobed hepatica (*Hepatica acutiloba*). For more information and photos of these native trees and plants, download ERG's free Dune Plants app from the Apple Store.

As newcomers to gardening with native plants, Mary and Nancy faced the common challenges of: knowledge; finding (and affording) native plants; and time. They drew on ERG's offerings, including the Digging in the Dunes class.

and the Native Plant Exchange, and had the good luck to win a serviceberry tree at the Indiana Audubon Society's Birding Festival.

Their comment when informed of the award: "We are surprised and honored. Surprised because we have so much yet to do; honored that our consistent efforts, doing a little at a time, year after year, are being recognized by fellow residents who care about encouraging natives and discouraging invasives and understand why that's important. We feel we are in the same situation as many Beverly Shores residents, working on beating back invasives that sometimes change every year, engaging in constant vigilance, occasionally trying to tackle a bigger problem."
