

**NEW YORK NATIVE PLANT CONSERVATIONIST AWARD
NEW YORK FLORA ASSOCIATION
2015 NATIVE ORCHID PROJECT**

The Garden Club of East Hampton (GCEH) received the New York Flora Association's 2015 New York Native Plant Conservationist Award for its Garden Club of America (GCA) sponsored Partners for Plants project at Barnes Hole Road to revive the existing population of *Platanthera ciliaris*, the yellow-fringed orchid. The population, which was thriving as recently as 20 years ago, is the last known population in New York State and has been reduced to one blooming plant.



The New York Flora Association (NYFA) was founded in 1990 with the goal of promoting field botany and a greater understanding of the plants that grow wild in New York State. NYFA has over 300 members and is the publisher of the NY Flora Atlas, an up to date source of information for the distribution of plants within the state, as well as information on plant habitats, associated ecological communities, and taxonomy. NYFA's Conservationist award is given "in recognition of outstanding contributions towards the conservation of New York's native flora." Former NYFA president, Steve Young, who also serves as Chief Botanist for the New York Natural Heritage Program and was an early supporter of GCEH's program, nominated GCEH for this award.

The GCEH's work at Barnes Hole Road is part of a multi-year project the club undertook in 2015 under the aegis of, and with funding from, the Garden Club of America's Partners For Plants (P4P) program. P4P is a joint program of GCA's Horticulture and Conservation Committees to monitor and conserve rare plants, restore native habitats, and remove invasive weeds on federal, state and local public lands. Since its founding in 1992, P4P has sponsored over 375 projects across the United States.

At the Barnes Hole Road site, GCEH is working in partnership with the Town of East Hampton, the Broadview Homeowner's Association, and The Nature Conservancy – the 3 landowners of the site in question. Last summer we protected the one blooming plant with a wire cage and placed chicken wire cloches over about 20 sterile leaves (a sterile leaf is an orchid plant that hasn't yet stored enough energy to bloom). This past March, a team of volunteers from GCEH, The Nature Conservancy, and the community, led by Dr. Eric Lamont, consulting botanist, cleared brush and overhanging limbs from the site in order to provide more sun to the forest floor. This will help the sterile leaves mature to the flowering stage. (See the East Hampton Star, April 21, 2016, "The Rare Orchid Emergency Squad.")

Dr. Lamont is optimistic that our efforts will be successful if volunteers continue protecting individual plants from herbivores and maintain the clearings we've created. The GCEH, in turn, is optimistic that we'll succeed in providing the resources and resolve to maintain this site long term, given our extensive history maintaining community gardens in East Hampton since the 1930's.