



## MID-ATLANTIC PLANT RESEARCH CONFERENCE

### SPEAKER BIOS

**Élan Alford, PhD**, Plant Conservation Scientist at Mt. Cuba Center, earned a B.S. in Ecology & Evolution at the University of Pittsburgh and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Ecology at Colorado State University. Élan initially worked in ecological consulting where she conducted rare plant, habitat, and wetland surveys. With survey knowledge she aided clients to achieve their projects in a regulatory-compliant manner. After seeing many remarkable sites during her private-sector career, Élan transitioned from finding practical and responsible environmental solutions in development to a conservation-centered approach. Now Elan focuses on using survey and data to tell native plant stories.

**Dr. Timothy Block, PhD**, is the John J. Willaman Chair of Botany and Director of Plant Science at the Morris Arboretum & Gardens. His research interests are generally centered on the flora of Pennsylvania, with particular interest in plant species that are rare, threatened, or endangered, or are becoming so due to factors that are not clearly understood. He is co-author of *The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual*, *Trees of Pennsylvania: A Complete Reference Guide*, and *Aquatic Plants of Pennsylvania: A Complete Reference Guide*.

**Emile D. DeVito, PhD**, has been the Manager of Science and Stewardship at the New Jersey Conservation Foundation since 1989. He received a doctorate in Ecology in 1988 for research on bird communities and vegetation landscapes in New Jersey's Pine Barrens. Dr. DeVito develops management plans for NJCF's 20,000+ acres of holdings designed to protect and enhance biological diversity. Emile educates government officials, advocacy groups, land trusts, teachers and students on forest-interior habitat and migratory stopover needs of Neotropical songbirds. He is a trustee of the Pinelands Preservation Alliance and the NJ Natural Lands Trust. He serves on the Endangered and Non-Game Species Advisory Committee within the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife, the New Jersey Invasive Species Council, and the Science Advisory Committee of the NY-NJ Trail Conference.

**Matt Kasson, PhD** is an Associate Professor of Forest Pathology and Mycology at West Virginia University. Dr. Kasson received his PhD in Plant Pathology from Pennsylvania State University where his research focused on using a native fungus, *Verticillium nonalfalfae*, as a biological control of the invasive tree, *Ailanthus altissima* (tree-of-heaven). He also holds an A.A.S. from Paul Smiths College and a B.S. and M.S. from the University of Maine. His current research areas include fungal-arthropod interactions, biological control of invasive plants and pathogens, and the biology and ecology of historic and emerging diseases of forest trees. Dr. Kasson is currently the interim director of the International Culture Collection of (Vesicular) Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fungi (INVAM) and currently has research focused on the metabolites associated with interactions between arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi and their plant partners. Dr. Kasson



teaches undergraduate courses on general plant pathology and forest pest management and offers special topics courses for graduate students including advanced plant disease diagnostics.

**Randall Morin** is a research forester with the Forest Service Northern Research Station's Forest Inventory and Analysis (NRS-FIA) program. He has been investigating landscape-level influences of disturbances on forest sustainability and reporting on the status, trends, and health of the nation's forests for nearly 20 years. He serves as a leader for research, reporting, and online tools for the regional and national FIA programs.

**Nate Shampine, CERP**, is Mt. Cuba Center's Natural Lands Manager responsible for implementing land conservation practices, creating and maintaining healthy and functional ecosystems. He is a graduate of SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry and is also a Certified Ecological Restoration Practitioner (CERP) through the Society for Ecological Restoration.

**Jared Westbrook, PhD**, is the Director of Science at The American Chestnut Foundation. Jared completed his Ph.D. in Plant Molecular and Cellular Biology at the University of Florida in 2014. He started at TACF in 2015 and became Director of Science for the organization in 2017. His primary research focus at TACF has been to apply genomics to all aspects of chestnut restoration including accelerated genomic selection for disease resistance, resistance gene discovery, and genomic prediction of climate adaptation.