

Q&A Story

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Introduction

Dr. Teri Jacobs is an assistant annual adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati with the School of Environment and Sustainability. She is also the Undergraduate Director for the Environmental Studies program. Finally, she is the co-owner and creator of Flutterby Farms and Gardens, a six-acre property dedicated to the protection of native species in the Southwestern Ohio area.

For this interview, I mainly focused on what efforts she takes in order to achieve her goal of promoting the wellbeing of native species, and I also just got to know her and her process when it came to running the farm.

Q&A

Q: What is Flutterby Farms and Gardens?

A: Flutterby Farms and Gardens is a 6-acre property my husband (Shane Mitchell) and I purchased last year. We were going to transform this place into a native garden or nursery, plus growing food and providing educational opportunities. Flutterby (which is a play on butterfly) Farms is a pollinator garden filled with native plants, native insects, birds, wildlife, wild landscaping, basically all the things people hate when they go to gardens. Where leaves are on the ground and the black eyed Susans are all still up with all their seed heads because it will attract birds in the winter where there's little food. It's already been certified as wildlife habitat. We even have a pollinator garden sign from the zoo. Most importantly, it is our home. We live on the property, but luckily it is big enough to the point where the public parts don't feel too invasive towards our privacy.

Q: What are challenges you've faced so far on your quest to promote the wellbeing of native species?

A: If you look at Honeysuckle, here's the best example. So last year when we bought the place and I was sitting in the back in what was supposed to be an herb garden. Which by the way I'm going to create it to be a herb garden, a combination bird and herb garden. You know, they feed the birds and we get our herbs and I'm going to grow this stuff. But I was out there and I saw a yellow warbler and I'm like, Oh my gosh, cool. A yellow warbler. But then all around our property is honeysuckle, honeysuckle with trunks that you could hug. I have never seen it that big, they've probably been here for 40 years. And they do produce berries and the birds do eat them. However, they've done the studies. Nutrition-wise, I always say they're like Twinkies. Ha! Basically, they don't have enough protein that native berries do. And so those proteins are what

help a bird subsist through the winter, the colder months so they survive or that they're healthier. And when they only eat Twinkies, you know that depresses health, whether it's a human or a bird.

Q: What have you done to combat danger to the native species?

A: I put in chokeberry and serviceberry, and we're going to have a bunch of elderberry. He (my husband) already had ponds of winterberry, which are beautiful, but I can tell you, winterberry does not have the berries. The birds eat them before winter comes, and it's amazing how many berries I have now, and they'll just fully be gone before winter even gets here.

Q: What interesting fauna have you seen on the farm?

A: It's bird heaven. If you're a birder. I've seen different not hatches, both gray and red breasted, not hatch. I've seen a blue, gray net catcher warbler. I mentioned we have a Cooper talk that lives here. We've heard an owl. I don't normally see it, but we've heard it. If you look around you'll see all sorts of cool insects. We had an Indian hemp plant and it had this emerald beetle associated with it. And it's beautiful. It's just like it sounds. It's a little shiny green insect. It was cool.

Q: What made you want to pursue this dream of yours?

A: I literally just wanted a place where I felt that I lived in a park-like setting. When I looked outside, that I felt that same peace as when I go backpacking or, you know, I don't have to travel anywhere for my nature. I just didn't want to do that. I wanted that to be my home. And somehow, it just fell in our laps. Interesting story about how we came about purchasing this property, the day we signed for it, It was my dad's birthday. However, my dad had died, October 11th was actually his 10 year death anniversary. We signed on his birthday, and so that was a very special day that I was able to buy what I consider my forever home on his birthday. Stranger thing was, the woman who owned this property who had died two years before, it was her birthday too. We signed on both seller and the buyer's parent's birthday.

Q: What plans do you have for the future?

A: My husband is a welder and he wants to make cute little welding art. And he's going to be creating some for the garden for when people come. I do want to grow and have teas. I want to teach people how to be sustainable. I want to and I can make soap. I want to sell soaps I make so people don't have all the chemicals that they put on their body. And when they wash it down off their body, it doesn't go into the stream and hurt anything. We can do a million things. My problem is I'm very good at that. I go crazy and I need to learn to focus on one thing only and get that right instead of being scattered. Like I said, I think I thrive on chaos.

Q: Are there any opportunities for students to get involved?

A: Students in Capstone last year, they created an endangered species garden. I'm trying to give UC students a place where they can do some research, where they can create, where they can play in the dirt. You can get the hands dirty, but they're playing in the soil. Not only that, but students are always invited to come and work, like write articles like this or practice art. We want to stress coming here for fun, too. I'd like to see students coming here and hosting bonfires or sleeping under the stars amongst nature.

Q: How can the public enjoy the farm?

A: We're going to allow people to come to the property, to wander the garden. Even though it is private property, I think it is too wonderful not to share with people. So it will be open to the public for people. They don't have to buy anything. They can come and enjoy. If they want to donate for endangered species, I'll have something out that they can donate. For endangered species we could always donate to the world wildlife fund. But I can also do nature conservancy or something with plants. I want people to have weddings here. I don't want to charge a ton. I don't believe people should go broke getting married. I really want people to enjoy the farm too without going broke. Even when I sell native plants, I want to sell it cheaper because I don't think our native plants cost that much, especially if we want to promote it, it should be cheap. That's the hardest thing with sustainability is making it cheap for everyone.

Q: What is the address, and where can we find more information?

A: The address is 2410 Lanes Mill Road, Hamilton, OH 45013, and our Instagram page is @flutterby_farms_and_gardens