Rachel Carson EcoVillage
at Providence Heights

Our vision is a world where people value connections with each other and nature, and human life contributes to the life of the planet.

Want to know about what RCE members are up to? Check out our blog - there are new posts several times a month!

November News

*"**Autumn** is a second spring when every leaf is a flower." ~ Albert Camus*

The RCE paddlers sure weren't draggin!

Rachel Carson Ecovillage awarded a bronze medal in the Hearts of Steel Pittsburgh Dragon boat Race

With picture perfect weather on October 10, Rachel Carson EcoVillagers scored third place out of eleven Community boats to win a bronze medal. Paddlers included Stefani Danes, Doug Cooper, Mark Paine, Sarah Vick, Grace Astraea, Becky Lubold, Kristi Karsh, Jim and Judy Robertson and their granddaughter Victoria and her husband Adam, Adam's father and his sister-in-law, Dick Myers, his son and grandson and several Pittsburgh Paddlefish. Their best time of the day was .58.22 seconds for a 200 meter race. Go team!

- By Judy Robertson, Founding member

Welcome New Explorer

Our EcoVillage community is delighted to welcome our newest Explorer Janice M. from TX.

Want to get to know our EcoVillage better?

You're invited to learn more about our EcoVillage at one of our introductory sessions. You'll hear updates on our construction process, find out details about our sustainable homes and meet members of the community. You'll have a chance to ask your questions, too. Register ahead. Our November sessions are Tuesday, November 8, 5:30 - 7pm ET; Saturday, November 14 12:30 - 2pm ET; and Sunday, November 17, 5 - 6:30pm ET.

RSVP via this link https://forms.gle/K1x4rNJDTe8MkicX6
Questions? Reach out to us via phone call or text at 412-573-1927 or email rceintro@gmail.com

You are also welcome to become an Explorer

Explorer membership gives you a low-risk opportunity to see whether Rachel Carson EcoVillage is the right "fit" for you and a chance to get to know your potential new neighbors. Explorer membership entitles you to take part in our planning meetings, virtual and in-person social events, and one-on-one meetings with members. It's easy to sign up from our website.

Founders' Corner

On a gorgeous fall day, Tracey and Amanda observed some new trees just planted on the Sisters' land. We look forward to watching these trees grow through the years.

Focus on Herbs: Lemon Balm

Photo credit: Photo by Victor Serban on Unsplash

Lemon Balm has rapidly become one of my new favorites as I've experimented with it this past winter. I first encountered it last fall as I was exploring my new herb books. It is both tasty and gentle, lending itself to many different concoctions as well as cooking and baking, making delicious cakes, jams, syrups and herbal teas. Young tender leaves are the best for this use, as the leaves grow more bitter as they age.

It is a surprisingly versatile herb, applying itself to multiple systems of the body in remarkably gentle ways. Lemon balm is great for anxiety and depression and supports sleep especially when grieving. It can help dispel gas and ease bloating especially when it's due to anxiety, nervousness or tension. A 2020 study showed lemon balm to be as effective as Fluoxetine without the side effects in treating mild depression. (Araj-Khodaei et al, 2020)

It has "Generally Regarded as Safe" status in the US and there are no known interactions with drugs. The only possible caution is with hypothyroidism, where there's a theoretical risk of lowering thyroid hormones further, however there are no documented cases of thyroid effect in humans. In tests with various bugs, Lemon Balm shows anti-viral effects against Enterovirus, Influenza, SARS, Herpes and HIV. It's also great for your skin, treating acne, bug bites, mild burns and mild psoriasis.

Even better is its flavor! It is sweet and fresh, like a sweet spring flower laced with lemon which explains the name given to it in the ancient herbarium book, Historia Plantarum (published c.300 BCE), where it was listed as honey-leaf.

Its scientific name is Melissa officinalis for the bees that love its flowers and nectar! So much so that some beekeepers will rub the inside of their hives with lemon balm to attract the bees. Officinalis means it was regularly stocked in apothecaries before modern medicine.

It is part of the Mint family of plants and shares that family's propensity for spreading and taking over an area in suitable climates, which includes Pennsylvania, so be prepared for that if you want to grow it here. It also grows well in pots and can be found wild, if you'd rather forage for it.
If you are looking for a yummy new flavor in tea or baking, I hope you'll try out the delicious lemon balm.

- By Mimi Baker, Founding member

Source: Corbett, S., Nelson, S. (2023). *Lemon Balm Monograph. Rowan + Sage Herbaria* Membership. Retrieved from rowanandsage.com/herbaria

Araj-Khodaei, M., Noorbala, A.A., Yarani, R., Emadi, F., Emaratkar, E., Faghihzadeh, S., … Naseri, M. (2020). *A double-blind, randomized pilot study for comparison of Melissa officinalis L. and Lavandula angustifolia Mill. with fluoxetine for the treatment of depression*. BMC Complementary Medicine and Therapies, 20(1), 1-9. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12906-020-03003-5

Our New Neighbor: The Forest

What to look for — and what you might plant — in the woods around Rachel Carson EcoVillage. In Part One, Elsa offered us a glimpse into what we might find in our forest.

Part Two:

If you want to plant something
Resist the urge to "improve" the forest floor right away. A first year of observation will tell you a lot — what's already there often turns out to be more extensive than a quick look suggests, especially with spring ephemerals that disappear entirely by June. If, after watching it through a full year, you find real gaps, the plants mentioned in last months article are all reasonable candidates to reintroduce, since they're native to exactly this forest type and ecoregion. A few practical notes:
Deer are likely the biggest constraint, more than sun or soil. Trillium, wild geranium, and black cohosh are all deer favorites and may need protection while establishing.
Check for invasives before adding natives. Amur honeysuckle, autumn olive, Japanese barberry, oriental bittersweet, and garlic mustard are common in this region and can undo any new planting fast if left unchecked. Learning to spot and pull these — especially garlic mustard in spring — is arguably a better use of early energy than planting.
Match light and moisture to what's already growing nearby. A patch of jewelweed or ferns is telling you something about that spot's moisture; use it rather than guessing.

- Elsa Higby, Exploring member

613 Marion Avenue

Why is that address meaningful to RCE? It's the address of the Rachel Carson Homestead, a museum that preserves the home in which Carson grew up, in Springdale, PA. Originally a 64-acre farm purchased by the Carsons in 1901, it included the white clapboard farmhouse that stands today on a quiet street lined with modern family homes.

Carson's father gradually sold off most of the acreage, and in around 1930 the home was sold to Angeline Sober, a local high school teacher. As Carson's reputation grew, Sober realized the importance of the property and began efforts to preserve it as an historical site, which led to the founding of the Rachel Carson Homestead Association in 1975.

On their way home from cheering on the RCE team at the Dragon Boat Festival, founders Tracey, Amanda, Paula, and Victoria paid a visit to the Homestead.

- By Victoria Clements, Founding member

Spread the word about RCE

You can help by wearing an RCE T-shirt! These brand-new cotton T shirts have been attracting lots of attention and inquiries about our ecovillage. Get yours by filling out this form – and help spread the word in your locality.

Newsletter staff
Many, many thanks to this month's contributors! Your editor humbly apologizes in advance for all typos and assorted goofs.

Coordinating Editor: Judy Trupin
Calendar Editor: Kelly Leonard
Contributors: Mimi Baker, Elsa Higby, Rachelle Nordman and Judy Trupin
Pictures: Amanda Chapman and Victoria Clements
Newsletter layout: Grace Astraea

Contact us at:
rachelcarsonecovillage@gmail.com
Our website: rachelcarsonecovillage.org
or call 412-441-2948
From all of us at Rachel Carson EcoVillage, with love.

Date of Publication: 11/1/2026

UNSUBSCRIBE