

Katie: Hey, we're Katie and Caitlin coming to you from our library living room. We are here not just as children's librarians, but as people who are parenting our own children.

Caitlin: Each month will bring a new conversation about parenting with helpful resources from our library and beyond. This is "Your Family, Your Library," and we are your librarians.

Katie: Last month, we were joined by Amanda, who is a naturalist at Oakton College, and the conversation was so riveting we couldn't let it end there. Here is part two of our conversation with Amanda Krause, where we continue to explore the amazingness that is native plants and how you can get involved. Thanks for being here and enjoy the rest of our conversation.

Caitlin: I will tell you that one of the things I am most proud of myself is removing, you know, the boring old evergreen bushes that were in front of our house and replacing them with native flowers. I talked to people at a couple of different plant nurseries, and then also talked with the good folks at Emily Oaks. My, my, my heart lives at Emily Oaks. I swear, I think, like, three quarters or maybe more of my garden comes from, from Emily Oaks plant sales. But it was amazing to me. And profoundly notable the way that my yard changed when I replaced those bushes with the native plants. So we have a lot of like, coneflowers and black-eyed Susans. In the spring, we've got the...oh, bananas, what's the name of that? Little pink penstemons. Oh, yes, I love that. It's so pretty. And, you know, the, the snake one.

Amanda: The rattlesnake master.

Caitlin: I have rattlesnake master, but also Ohio spider wart, which is not snakes at all. It's spiders. Right. Spiders and snakes. Anyway, once we planted all these things, it was like squirrel, bird, butterfly, bee, it just was noisy and alive and. And now it's. It's big and it's energetic and it's really fun to be a part of it.

Amanda: I love that so much. And you're. And you are exactly right. I tell folks that the magic native plants. Really? I mean, if you plant it, they will come. You know, your yard turns into like a Disney movie. It's, it's so incredibly rewarding. And when we think about it from the wildlife perspective, and let's talk about the big evergreen shrubs that you took out. Right. They probably are not native to the Chicagoland area.

Caitlin: Hundred percent.

Amanda: Yeah. You know, and there's a whole there's a whole bunch of plants that are commonly used in traditional landscaping for one

reason or another. Right? That's, they have become the default. But from the wildlife perspective, they look at that and it might as well be like a concrete green statue, right? They can't eat it. They don't really know how to nest in it or live in it. It doesn't contribute anything. Yeah. They're just confused, like, what is that? Yeah. But when we compare that to native plants, these are plants that wildlife's species have developed, along with over thousands and thousands and thousands of years. And so they know that they can eat it. They know that they can, lay eggs on it like butterflies laying their eggs on milkweed plants. Yeah. I saw such a magical moment yesterday at Oakton's Des Plaines campus, where a female monarch came and just laid one little egg on a milkweed leaf and then flitted off, you know.

Caitlin: You saw it happen?

Amanda: And it was just the...It was such a magical moment. And, you know, monarchs are a great sort of intro species for families to get involved with. And, you know, we all probably grew up with monarchs everywhere, right? It was just orange, black butterflies everywhere. Just sort of we take them for granted. Well, they are. Unfortunately, monarchs have declined about 90% in the last 20 years. Monarchs are going extinct unless we all start planting milkweed. So let's plant milkweed.

Caitlin: Plant it.

Amanda: Let's plant it, right. Milkweed is the only plant that the baby monarchs that the caterpillars eat. So if the baby caterpillars don't have anything to eat, that's it. So what we do is we plant milkweed, and there's a whole bunch of different varieties here in the Chicago region. We have pink milkweed, orange milkweed, white milkweed, all sorts of stuff. So you plant milkweed so the babies have something to eat, and then you plant some native plants that have like a nectar in it. So the adults have something to eat. And the life cycle happens right before your eyes. And it's so fun to look for all stages, right? I mean, when the orange adults show up in your yard, you do a little happy dance.

Caitlin: Yep.

Katie: During the pandemic, my husband and I, with our kids, we, they are two and five at the time, and we helped to hatch a monarch.

Amanda: Oh, how wonderful.

Katie: Yeah. And we had the, we have the slow motion or you can speed it up video of like the whole process happening. It's really really cool. And also my favorite children's book. "Gotta Go, Gotta Go." It's all about monarchs, but it has its like really catchy line. Gotta go,

I gotta go, I gotta go to Mexico.

Amanda: Yes!

Katie: So it's like this caterpillar that you know, is like eating its way and it's like, gotta make its cocoon.

Amanda: Yes.

Katie: The chrysalis and all that. So it'll be on our book list.

Amanda: Excellent. Wonderful. Yeah, yeah. Monarchs are really magical.

Caitlin: They really are.

Amanda: I mean, there's two big mysteries surrounding them. And number one, Katie, you're right. These tiny, tiny, tiny, tiny things fly to Mexico and back.

Katie: Amazing.

Caitlin: Unbelievable.

Amanda: And I mean, so that's, that's one of the, one of the crazy things. And the other thing is that it's, it's not actually every generation that goes. So in one calendar year, there are four generations and of monarchs happening. And it's that fourth generation that somehow emerges bigger and stronger and goes to Mexico and lays eggs, and then their babies know to come back to the U.S.

Caitlin: I don't understand.

Amanda: Nature is fascinating.

Caitlin: It's so fun, you know, and I think, like the apiaries, like, like you said, Amanda, that, monarchs are really great entry point into some more exciting nature stuff. You can go to libraries or, you know, like you did Katie, where you raised, the monarchs and then set them free. And I know I've read some things that say that maybe that's not always like the best thing to do, but I will say we had, back when Sue Teller was here, she made a monarch enclosure, and we hatched butterflies here in the library. And the kids were riveted. I mean, they came in day after day to check the progress. And then the kids that were here when the, the chrysalis opened up, it was like it was magic. I mean, it was genuinely magic. And I will say for me, you know, like, I knew how it happened. I knew the process. I had never seen it in person before. But then once you see those caterpillars in nature, it's earth shattering. I mean, you feel like you've just watched something miraculous happen.

Amanda: Because you have.

Caitlin: Because you have.

Katie: Yeah.

Caitlin: I mean, and it's I just, I feel like creating those opportunities with the apiary and, you know, with these public opportunities where you can see, you know, nature happening, you know, even if it's a little bit scientific or even if it's not like the ideal way in which a bee is raised or a monarch is hatched, like you are creating little baby plant nerds.

Katie: Yeah.

Amanda: And that's what the world needs.

Caitlin: That's what the world needs.

Amanda: You're absolutely right. And, and when we make the little baby plant nerds, you know, you know, kids have such an opportunity to, to really contribute. I gave my niece, shout out to Paloma. I gave my niece...

Katie: That's such a great name.

Amanda: Isn't it lovely?

Caitlin: It means "dove," right?

Amanda: It does. A plus, gold star.

Caitlin: Yes. This is the second badge you've given me today. And I have to tell you, I really needed it.

Amanda: Who doesn't love sash full of badges?

Caitlin: I don't know. I don't know who doesn't love it, but one time I went to the dermatologist and she told me that I got an A+ because it was a very quick appointment, and I'm still riding that high. I need that extrinsic reward

Amanda: Listen, on my bathroom mirror. I have a little sticker of a puppy that says "I was brave today." And I got it at the doctor because they were giving stickers to the little kids and I was like, excuse me. I was also brave today. Yes.

Caitlin: It's hard.

Amanda: Yes. But so when I gave, I gave my niece Paloma, this little

monarch kit. And it's just, you know, like little action figures of the adult and the caterpillar and the chrysalis, and it just really trained her what to look for. And so they started planting milkweed in their yard and planting some of the nectar plants. And sure enough, she said, hey, look at that thing way up there, you know? And she found a little chrysalis. And the monarch chrysalis is, I mean, they're green, but they have this gold on them, as you know, this gold that is like it looks fake. It is so bright gold on the rim. And it's just this crazy little nature treasure. And the kiddos can find the caterpillars so easily. They are so eye catching with that striking, you know, yellow and black. And of course, the kiddos have a different vantage point. You know, we've got these adult eyes that are 5 or 6 feet above the ground and the kiddos can see the stuff that's low. And you know another thing the kiddos can look for.

Caitlin: Yeah.

Amanda: This is something that we can use everybody's eyes for. You may or may not have seen Chicagoland News regarding the spotted lanternfly.

Caitlin: Dun dun dun!

Katie: Another villain.

Amanda: And yeah we have our villain, another villain. So the spotted lanternfly is a new insect in the U.S. It came to the U.S. about ten years ago. It arrived in Pennsylvania and has steadily been making its way west. And, you know, it doesn't bite or sting or anything. So we don't ever have to be afraid of it, but it really hurts the trees. It really likes apple trees and other fruit trees. So the price of fruit is going up a little bit. It really, it really likes, grape vines and hops. So the wine and beer industries are taking a hit. So it's just one of these...

Katie: Apparently it really likes inflation.

Amanda: Yes. AKA inflation bug. It's interesting. Right. Because this is something that that our childhoods, my childhood certainly did not include this crazy looking little bug and the, the immature stage kind of looks like it's almost like a ladybug if it weren't round and cute. Right? It's very angular and it's very black and white and red, and that's the immature stage. And then the adult stage is kind of like a little tan moth with, black polka dots all over it.

Caitlin: It's very cute. It's I mean, it really is beautiful.

Amanda: Yeah.

Caitlin: When I tell you that we have a table full of parasites right

now, like...

Amanda: Sorry, sorry, not sorry. Yeah, yeah.

Caitlin: You will love this. A kid did legit bring a jar of worms to the desk last week or the week before last.

Amanda: Love it. A little nature nerd.

Caitlin: They handed it to me, and I didn't know what it was. I picked it up. I was like, oh. Where did you find this? They're like, over there. And I was like, oh, what? Yeah. And then so it turns out that they brought the jar of worms with them to the library, which I just wasn't. I don't actually, to be honest, I'm a little squeamish about worms, but I like them, I respect them. I just didn't expect to see a jar of them in the library.

Amanda: Right.

Caitlin: So I, I thought this was particularly notable. I wrote my husband about it and my son, who was off at camp: "Jar of Worms Day. What else could happen?" Two days later, a kid goes, "look what I've got" and has this little outstretched hand opens it up and says, it's snails. And I'm like, it can't be snails. It's like I'm looking at it like it's just like, oh, it's like four little teeny tiny shells. And then one of the shells stuck out a little head and kind of waved a feeler at me, and I was like, oh, what?

Amanda: Yes.

Caitlin: Why do you have a handful of snails?

Amanda: I mean, why not?

Katie: The life of a children's librarian.

Caitlin: Yeah, it was a week.

Katie: I love it.

Caitlin: I felt like it was a banner week.

Amanda: I mean, you know what I hear, though, in those stories, I hear little humans who are fascinated by nature.

Caitlin: Yeah.

Amanda: And have not learned that man is separate from nature, you know, because we're not.

Katie: Yeah.

Amanda: I love that enthusiasm.

Caitlin: I loved it too, but I loved it more when they took the stuff back outside.

Amanda: Fair enough.

Caitlin: So I have like certain sensory things that like make me feel a little cringey and one is like snails or slugs on carpet, like I just yeah, I kept picturing the snit, like in worms too. Like, really like or like fish. This does not need to go in the podcast. But yeah, yeah, I think about it sometimes and it makes me like, [sound effect], but yeah, I agree with you. I mean, I think 100% was a kid that was just really excited. And I think what had been happening is that they had been outside playing in our courtyard, and they had found those little snails which took some doing. They were tiny. They were really like, like small little snails. So I was I mean, I was excited too. Less excited about the jar of worms than the snails.

Amanda: But at least the worms were contained.

Caitlin: They were contained. Yeah. That's true. It's funny. They were indeed contained.

Amanda: The great thing is that kids, because I have a different vantage point than humans, right? The kids eyes are valuable.

Caitlin: Yes.

Amanda: You know, in, So these kiddos can absolutely help the state of Illinois track this new spotted lanternfly. Now Chicago had, the very first spotted lantern-fly in Illinois was discovered last fall in September, and it was in Chicago. So, you know, we knew it was only a matter of time, but they're here. Now, the good news is that we had, we have about ten years in since they arrived to the US. So we have a little bit of a better idea of what to do. And the very first thing that we need is just eyes. We just need reports. We need Intel. So all your kiddos can be little nature agents to see if they can find any more of these spotted lanternflies and they can email lanternfly@illinois.edu with any pictures or report any sightings so we can get an idea of how big this this new neighbor is going to be for us.

Katie: Wow. That's cool.

Caitlin: What's happening in terms of I mean, we talked a little bit about buckthorn abatement, but what is happening? Is there a plan for getting rid of lanternfly?

Amanda: It is unfortunately a squish on sight.

Okay.

Amanda: We don't we don't have a lot of those. And you know, it's it's a complex thing, but because we're, you know, we're ten years in but we're only ten years, we're still trying to see exactly how much damage might, might be done by these cute little critters. And I think it's worth reiterating that they do not bite or sting or anything. They don't bother pets. They don't bother people. They're really neat to look at. But we are literally collecting real time scientific data on how they're going to impact our forests. Are lumber prices going to keep going up. Are paper prices and, and fruit prices...

Caitlin: Our grocery bills.

Amanda: Oh, our poor grocery bills. Yeah. My goodness. So absolutely kiddos can keep an eye out for that.

Katie: So let's take the outside. Inside the BOOMbox will use science, tech, engineering, art and math to explore all things nature. Fine. More information in our show notes.

Caitlin: I'm curious to know what other opportunities there are for our young friends and our and their families to get involved.

Amanda: Oh yeah, so many fun opportunities. Aside from just looking up the volunteer opportunities at the Cook County Forest Preserves, folks can always email me at Naturalist at Oakton dot Edu and we will have all sorts of events coming up in October. a big one and honestly, my favorite part of the ecological restoration year is coming up and that is seed collecting. It is such a treasure hunt and it's so relaxing and it's so fun, and we just need all the little hands out there. So we do our seed collecting on both campuses, and then we use our seed to expand our native plantings. When you're talking about your yard and the critters and the butterflies.

Katie: So for somebody who doesn't have a yard like I myself, I live in a condo building and we have a shared backyard and we also have a porch and stuff, and also, as someone who doesn't know much about native plants, like, what's the best place to start?

Amanda: Great question. So when we look at all the big scary headlines and we go, "oh no, what's going to happen?" You know, and well, native plants are the answer. Really. Native plants are the answer to so many of these things.

Katie: I need a button that says that native like native plants are the answer.

Amanda: Ooo yes.

Katie: Or, "Yes! Native Plants!"

Amanda: Let's do that. I should have... oh I should have brought my little vest with all my little oh my little buttons. The little plant buttons. Yeah. Right. So people can incorporate native plants anywhere. If you want to do some, cone flowers or some shade plants in pots on your patio or balcony, you can do that and just provide, I mean, imagine that you are a hungry little butterfly going around and you are just looking for a flower with nectar because you are hungry and you are trying to get to Mexico. And all you can see are tomato plants and lawns. Then if you have a patio that has some coneflowers on it or, you know, some, some pretty echinacea or some other things, you are absolutely providing meals. So, so you can do that. You certainly can volunteer either at the Cook County Forest Preserves or with myself here at Oakton or all sorts of other places. And another great place to start is just learning about native plants. There are so many resources available, you know, we'll have some listed in the show notes we'll have. Gosh, there's all sorts of native plant accounts on Instagram that are super, super fun and educational.

Caitlin: We have some incredible books here in the library too, that I've checked out myself. So upstairs in our gardening collection, there's some books. One is like planning your native garden, which I think is really cool and helpful. So if you're looking to like add that diversity and also like what's going to grow nicely next to each other to help, you know, some plants stand up that are prone to sort of flopping over. We'll add those to our book list as well.

Amanda: Oh great point. And then I'll have some resources as well that I've collected. There were some wonderful planting guides put out that cover all sorts of different yard types. Right. So if you do have space, if you have a yard that you want to put stuff in, you know. Where do you even start? There's these really nice little tailored guides that are like, okay, if you have full sun, here's options. If you have shade, if you have a really wet area, that's often when we will do what's called a rain garden. So like I have a little rain garden where my downspout comes out and it's all sorts of plants that love to suck up moisture and look good while they're doing it.

Caitlin: 100%. And that's a great thing to investigate. If you live someplace like Skokie, that tends to flood a lot.

Amanda: Yes, and I mean, of course, the Des Plaines campus. We are on the Des Plaines River, so our four soccer fields get flooded. But, again, that is one of the wonderful benefits of native plants and goodness, I could go on and on about the benefits of native plants, but it's flood mitigation. Guess what the number one crop grown in the

US is? Lawns.

Caitlin: Lawns are a crop?

Amanda: Lawns are a crop, right? It's something that people intentionally grow, just a patch of that one plant.

Caitlin: What.

Amanda: So now there's all sorts of, movements out there to get rid of lawns, You know, and, and I'm not saying that we all have to have zero lawn because I know my partner loves a lawn. We compromise, but we call lawns green concrete. Right? Similar to those big shrubs that you took out. All right. A good lawn doesn't have anything eating it. Right. We're, we're, we're putting a lot of fertilizer and pesticide on it that's running off into our waterways. We are spending time and money mowing it, possibly with gas powered mowers. So we're using fossil fuels, you know. So really it's shocking. But lawns are actually really bad for the environment. But like I said, I still have some lawn. And so I'm not saying we have to get rid of our lawns. But if we can think about maybe decreasing them, maybe putting, you know, cutting, cutting a little corner and putting some native plants in, that is a great way, to add some diversity to your yard and get that little, little Disney effect with all the birds and butterflies.

Caitlin: You know, I read a thing and I might be wrong about this, but I read a thing a while ago that talked about how lawns used to be primarily clover.

Amanda: Yes.

Caitlin: And grass was sort of like a big, a big push. It was like, I don't know how Big Grass is, but like there was some sort of big grass push to get people to de-clover their yards. And it is just weird how we get manipulated into doing these things that really don't ultimately benefit us.

Amanda: Yes.

Caitlin: But people seem like they're going back in a clover kind of direction, which is kind of cool. I'm curious to learn more about it.

Amanda: Well, if you're curious. Boy, have I got a book for you. In the show notes, I will have this book that I, I tell you, it is fascinating. You wouldn't think that like a book about the history of lawns would be fascinating, but it is so full of intrigue.

Caitlin: Maybe you wouldn't think that.

Amanda: So this is a book called American Green The Obsessive Quest

for the Perfect Lawn by Ted Steinberg. And it is a quick read. And it is good. And it is fascinating because lawns originally were a flex like, I don't know if the kids still say that, can I? I can I still say that?

Caitlin: I mean, I think you can.

Amanda: Okay, okay. We can say it here. So lawns originally were such a flex to be like I own land and I'm wealthy enough that I don't have to grow food on it. I don't have to even have, like, livestock or chickens on it or anything. I can afford to have land that is useless.

Caitlin: Oh my gosh.

Amanda: And somehow that became our default.

Katie: That's so American.

Amanda: Isn't that so American? It's just consumerism. Yes. So people are waking up.

Katie: Lawns are big business. I'm just like envisioning this like grass lobby.

Amanda: You're not wrong.

Caitlin: No, I think it's real.

Amanda: Yeah. So check out this book. American Green. I'm telling you...

Caitlin: I'm going to read a lawn book.

Amanda: I mean, it was, some very deliberate brainwashing on the part of Big Lawn. And here we are. So. So that is just a fascinating book. And, Katie, you asked about what folks can do, and there's so many things, right? So if you have a yard where you want to do big things, that's amazing, right? I love it. That's great. If you have a yard where you just maybe want to dip your toe in, or if you have, a patio or balcony. Absolutely. We just got a couple native plants you are feeding some butterflies that would have gone hungry. And if you just want to maybe just take that first step to learn about stuff. That's, that's, that's my M.O., right? Like, I always want to kind of learn stuff. Like I said, big nerd, right? I want to learn.

Katie: Amanda, I knew you were our people when you showed up with all these handouts.

Caitlin: Oh, it just made my heart sing.

Katie: Yeah, they're all over my desk.

Amanda: Yeah, I know, I'm like, my partner teases me because it's like "you're supposed to be advocating for the trees, but you love paper handouts." Like, well...

Katie: Well, I will I will hold on to this. Yes.

Amanda: Yeah, I know you will. I know you will. Yeah. Yeah. So just learning about native plants and there's so much to learn and it's so fun, right. Checking out the events, not just the volunteering events, but just some of the fun events at the Cook County Forest Preserves. Or emailing me at naturalist at Oakton dot Edu and, you know, we'll just get you connected to all sorts of different opportunities.

Katie: And that seed collecting event in October will be a really good opportunity for families.

Amanda: 100%. Yeah, yeah. And we'll do multiple, multiple, seed collecting opportunities because they ripen at different times. And that's one that it's just so rain dependent and that's why I say it's just best to get on that notification list. If it has rained and the seeds are soggy, we cannot collect them or they will just mold in the bag. But when we go out seed collecting, like I said, it is such a treasure hunt. It is so fun because number one, you are learning about native plants. You're learning what they look like in all different stages. You're learning what it takes to realize that it's ripe. So sometimes there's a really rare native plant and you found it and it has seeds. Oh, but it's not ripe yet. And you have to come back in two weeks. Oh, no drama, right.

Caitlin: I love it.

Amanda: And they're often they have all these wonderful sensory aspects to seed collecting. There's some that will release these aromas when you pick the seeds. And it's just like mint or bergamot tea aromas. There's some that pop off the stem and into your hand, like bubble wrap, like pop pop pop pop pop pop pop. So satisfying. Yeah. Yes.

Katie: And you also mentioned that there's a shortage of native plant seeds, which I just kind of shocked to hear.

Amanda: Yeah, that's exactly right. It's a good problem to have. But as more and more people realize that native plants are the answer, the supply chain just hasn't caught up yet for native plant seed. So there is a global shortage of native plant seed. And that's why we really need all the hands we can get. Grown-up hands, little hands. Here at Oakton, part of our environmental responsibility is making sure that we are investing in native plants and that we're stewarding the land

well. So there's a parcel on the Des Plaines campus that originally was classic Illinois Tall-grass Prairie. And Illinois, of course, is the Prairie State. But 99.999% of our prairie is gone. So at Oakton, we are converting a whole bunch of our turf grass back into pollinator prairie. So we have areas like that on both campuses where we're converting the turf grass into pollinator gardens. And, one of my favorite things about native plants, I have so many, but one of my favorite things about native plants is that unlike the plants at the big box stores that are genetically modified, the flowers of native plants turn into free seeds for more native plants, right? Instead of just being a flower and then just dying and nothing. So we, we know that native plants are the answer. We have all of these wonderful seeds in the face of a global seed shortage, and we get to go out there and get them. And it's fun.

Katie: That's exciting.

Caitlin: It's really cool. Yeah. It's, could you also talk about the, the Oak tree program?

Amanda: Yeah. So the Village of Skokie, in addition to the Skokie Roots for Trees campaign, where they're planting hundreds and hundreds of new trees, Skokie also has an opportunity where you can get free trees to plant in your parkway, if you are a Skokie resident. And here in the ecological restoration field, we always say if you have an opportunity to plant a tree, plant an oak. Absolutely plant an oak. And the reason for that is because oaks are the mega marts of the forest. So other trees might feed 5 or 20 or maybe 100, different wildlife species, you know, maybe butterflies that feed on the leaves or, different critters. And oak trees feed over 500 different species.

Katie and Caitlin: Wow.

Amanda: I mean, far and away, far and away, more than any other species. So that's why we say oaks are the mega marts of the forest. They really are the backbone. We call them a keystone species. They support everything else. So, if you have an opportunity to plant a tree, plant an oak. And in addition to the Village of Skokie's Free Trees in the Parkways program, there's another opportunity to get free trees. And that is the Restore the Canopy program from the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Chicago. That's a it's a mouthful, but it's this is the organization that manages all of our stormwater. Make sure that we don't flood. And what's a great way to help mitigate an incredible amount of stormwater? Let's plant trees. So they're giving away free trees as well. So you can see that link in the show notes. And anything we can do to plant native trees, to plant oak trees, all these things are going to be mitigating stormwater runoff. They're going to be mitigating some of the species declines and the species extinctions. And they're going to help our pocketbooks, too, right? Native plants are really low maintenance

because they evolved here. They're used to Chicago winters. They're fine.

Caitlin: They're fine.

Amanda: They're used to our terrible, terrible clay soil. Right.

Caitlin: They love it. Yeah.

Amanda: Okay. Well, when we talk about native plants, I mean, what's a native plant? Right. And that is a plant just that developed here. Right here in Chicagoland. It evolved here. It's not a plant that maybe somebody thought was cool in Australia and brought over here. So native plants have so many benefits. Number one well, Caitlin, I hear that you're a native plant person.

Caitlin: I love them.

Amanda: All right. Hit us. What are some benefits of native plants?

Caitlin: Well, I think the, the animal expansion, the bugs and the butterflies and the, the, squirrels and the birds. And I know it turned into a real middle aged person. I just, like, really eased into it with my Merlin bird and...

Amanda: Yeah. And I'm right there with you.

Caitlin: There's so many more. There's so many more than I used to have. And I think the flood mitigation that we talked about where, you know, if you have a watery yard and you plant the deep taproot, like that's what they want, they they love that water. They suck it right up.

Amanda: They really do. And you know, we talked a little bit about lawns. And one of the one of the funny things about lawns is that the roots, as you may know of when you've done some gardening, you know, they're like maybe an inch, maybe two inches deep on that on that lawn plant, which is not a native plant, but our native plant roots can be 12, 15 feet deep there.

Caitlin: It's amazing.

Amanda: I mean, so incredible.

Katie: That plant's not going anywhere.

Amanda: No, and that's one of the reasons that the plant can survive in this terrible Chicago clay soil and, and our harsh winters. The plants are fine, and that deep root system can withstand our drought and will definitely suck up a whole bunch of our flood water. So there

we go. Native plants are drought resistant. They can help with flood water mitigation. They are really low maintenance compared to plants from other countries, and they feed the wildlife at the same time. It's just a win-win, win-win-win.

Caitlin: So many wins.

Amanda: Absolutely.

Caitlin: Teens can learn more about our local nature and earn service hours by harvesting and scattering native plant seeds on Indigenous Peoples Day. Learn more in our show notes. Amanda hopes to see you there.

Katie: All right, Caitlin.

Caitlin: I don't know what kept me going this month, Katie, am I going?

Katie: I know what kept me going.

Caitlin: What kept you going?

Katie: Meeting Amanda and learning more about the nature that's around us. And, like, what I can do or, like, I just. I mean, I've always been a nature lover, and I love being outdoors, but, like, it's my goal to know more about what's around me. And because I think the more you know about something, the more you're able to give it the attention and the protection that it needs. And I think, you know, nature needs as much of that as possible now.

Amanda: Absolutely. The more you know, right?

Katie: Yes, the more you know. And also just about native plants are the answer. If that's not a tagline, I don't know.

Caitlin: I do love that. Maybe that's what's keeping me going.

Katie: Yeah. So and I just like your enthusiasm for what you do and you know, the knowledge that you've brought to this conversation. I just I'm very, very thankful. So thank you for your time.

Amanda: Thank you. I'm so honored to be here. And clearly I just love talking about native plants. So thank you for having this conversation.

Caitlin: The feeling is very mutual and actually I think I will piggyback off of what you said because we had the pleasure of meeting you earlier this week. And granted, I'm in a very, specific place with my daughter and I are rereading Anne of Green Gables together and the

descriptions of that Canadian landscape and woodland I just love. It's very visceral, like you really feel like you're there and, you know, the, the goldens and the sinews and all the, the words that Lucy Maud Montgomery uses are perfect. But I also feel like we've met a kindred spirit this week, and it has been a genuine pleasure talking to you about this stuff.

Amanda: Well the feeling is mutual.

Caitlin: Yay.

Amanda: And, you know, you just you sent me right back in that and walking that pathway down to Diana's house.

Caitlin: Right?

Amanda: Yes, yes. Oh, boy. That sent me right back. Well, I am I gosh, I am delighted to be here, as I've said, and will talk about native plants forever. And I'll have all sorts of goodies in the show notes, lots of book recommendations, lots of links, lots of things that anybody can jump into. And I have to say something that is keeping me going this week. It's the idea of the farmer's market tomorrow morning and the tomato pie I'm going to make.

Caitlin: Oh my gosh.

Amanda: Have you had tomato pie.

Caitlin: Never.

Katie: No, tell me more.

Amanda: Oh my goodness. So it is, it is the height of summer. So you have a traditional pastry pie crust. And it's very simple. Just layer in those fresh, fresh ripe summer tomatoes. You don't want those grocery store tomatoes. Those are no good, right. So you have some, some tomatoes some fresh basil. And then it gets a topping. A secret topping that I just learned is like, it's just cheddar cheese and mayonnaise, I think. Yeah. And then the way it bakes and you get that cheesy goodness baked into those fresh July tomatoes, it is summer on a plate with a little fresh salad. Oh, it's so good.

Caitlin: You're blowing my mind.

Katie: Sounds amazing.

Amanda: The farmer's market in T minus...

Caitlin: That's right.

Katie: I love it. That's it for us this month. Remember to keep in touch with us. We'd love to hear from you. Email us our podcast at [Skokie library.info](mailto:Skokie_library.info).

Caitlin: And don't forget if you've enjoyed this episode. And honestly, how could you not have? Or previous episodes, Rate and reviews on your favorite podcatcher.

Katie: This has been Katie and Caitlin with "Your Family, Your Library." Produced by Amber Hayes and sound engineer by Paul Knutson. Bye guys. Thanks, Amanda!

Amanda: Bye!