

**Season 4, Episode 2:** Connecting to Communities through the Landscape

**Host:** ESF President Joanie Mahoney

**Guest:** Anne Godfrey and Matt Potteiger

- Anne Godfrey:** What we make, be it a photograph or a drawing, how we tell a story, has as much to do with our personal experience as it has to do with the subject matter we're working with.
- Matthew Potteiger:** Coming into a community, what are the stories here? Looking at it may provide clues, but people may read the stories and clues in different ways depending on their experiences.
- Anne Godfrey:** People matter. Stories matter. Different experiences matter. The experiences maybe we don't hear about as often matter.
- Matthew Potteiger:** So we're factoring in different cultural aspects in these system that may not be included in certain aspects and depth.
- Joanie Mahoney:** Welcome to season four of Campus Conversations, the podcast. I'm Joanie Mahoney, and I have the honor of serving as SUNY ESF president and as I say in all of these episodes, that I feel very fortunate in it that we have such wonderful faculty that will stop what they are doing in their busy day and talk to us and share some about themselves and about the work that they do here at the college with the broader community. Today I have the opportunity to welcome and Godfrey and Matt Pottinger, who are both part of SS Department of Landscape Architecture. We're going to talk about how to connect to communities through the landscape via different mediums and uses photography to understand value and design landscape places. While Matt focuses on growing sustainable food systems. Thank you both very much for joining me today.
- Matthew Potteiger:** Great to be here.
- Anne Godfrey:** Thank you.
- Joanie Mahoney:** Anne let's start with you. I like to give the listeners a little bit about the people behind the research and the work that's being done here. So how about if you tell us a little bit about yourself. Where did you come from and how did you end up here on the faculty at ESF?
- Anne Godfrey:** Sure. So, I started my career in landscape architecture in Oregon formally, although more informally in California. I got into all of this as a professional pruner, doing fine maintenance and Japanese gardens, and that led to a path of going into graduate school. My mentor, Bardwell Smith, encouraged me to look at landscape architecture. I started the University of Oregon, and I consider Oregon really my home landscape, which is a question I ask a lot of

my students. In that setting, that's where my interest in photography really started to grow and thrive. I'm an interdisciplinarian at heart. I was an American studies major at Carleton College as a undergrad. So landscape architecture and design then dovetailed into thinking about how photography is used to influence the way that we think about and understand landscapes. I did my primary research at the University of Oregon, and that subject created a course set of courses around photography and landscape architecture and started the first of my three books while teaching at the University of Oregon. I came to ESF six years ago, which is that time has gone by really fast and I came to ESF looking for a home that would support my work in really digging in deep into thinking about how can we utilize photography in a more active way in the way that we photograph landscapes. So not only does that fit into landscape architecture, but it's been fantastic to work with the environmental studies students across campus to really deepen that work and alter and broadened my work. So, it's been a nice journey. I would say, coming here and Matt was one of the first people that I met.

**Joanie Mahoney:** Well, that's a perfect segue. So, Matt, before we start talking about the work that you're both doing, what was your path here to joining us at ESF?

**Matthew Potteiger:** Well, I grew up directly south of here. If you take I-81 South and get on the Pennsylvania Turnpike, I grew up outside Redding, Pennsylvania, and that's a really culturally rich area of Pennsylvania, German and a lot of other diversity. And I was fortunate to grow up against the woodland at the edge of a community, and I spent most of my time in the woods growing up and my brother was always wanted to be an architect, so but I couldn't do that. So while he was building a cabin in the woods when we were kids, I was out scouting the territory up and making campfires all throughout the woodland. So I had a really that orientation towards landscape and also art. So and I was fortunate to find landscape architecture because it combined both of those things and as well as science and ecology. So I went to Penn State as an undergrad in their landscape architecture program, and right after that I completed that degree. I had to go west for my graduate degree. I went out to Cal Berkeley, and that was such a great move because up until that time I had never been west of Pittsburgh. And I guess at that time you could get an unlimited train ticket on Amtrak where you could get on and off for two weeks. And so I spent two weeks traveling across the country, and that really made a difference. And I remember, you know, waking up on the train in North Dakota and looking out.

**Joanie Mahoney:** And what an experience that must have.

**Matthew Potteiger:** Yeah. The first of all, seeing the landscape change as you subtract water from it and this less work and seeing the ecology change, but also really seeing the cultural differences. And then I was fortunate at UC Berkeley to have a very strong cultural geography program. And also they had a scholar there named

J.B. Jackson, and it was his last year teaching and he pretty much founded a whole journal called Landscape and sort of contemporary focus on cultural aspects of landscape, be it really cross-disciplinary between he wasn't a geographer, he wasn't a historian, he was an independent scholar who brought together a lot of design, geography, social sciences. So I was really fortunate to have that experience. And because I had all these questions traveling across the landscape, like, what is this?

**Joanie Mahoney:** Why did that change like that?

**Matthew Potteiger:** Yeah. And so that, that class just that that's what it was all about. And so that pretty much influenced my career then in terms of looking at culture and landscape and interested in culture, geography, but also anthropology and folk life. So with my degree from Berkeley, I started working and I had to come back east, okay, I had to go west, I had to come back east. So I figured I just wanted to get back to this landscape. I realized its value, its differences, and I was pretty rooted here in terms of family and, and history. So I started working in Maine, in Portland, Maine, which is a great place. But then I found out about a teaching job in Indiana. So, I taught for three years there. And then this job opportunity came up here in Syracuse, and I had known about the program here when I was a student. I would go to conventions, student conventions, and I saw what the Syracuse students were doing and I thought, that's really interesting stuff. It was kind of cutting edge. It was also really community engaged. And so I applied and I was really fortunate to get this.

**Joanie Mahoney:** What year was that?

**Matthew Potteiger:** Oh, do I have to tell?

**Joanie Mahoney:** No, but you've been here longer than and I'm guessing.

**Matthew Potteiger:** I again, I believe it was 1984, so I've been here a long time. As I've also tells you, it's a meaningful place. I haven't looked to go other places partly because of the program here, partly because we were situated in an amazing part of the country.

**Joanie Mahoney:** I couldn't agree more with all of that. So, I'm glad that you made your way back. But I do think it's so important for people to travel and to have that experience of seeing other places and meeting other people. And second best maybe reading books about other places. I have a son who's currently doing a semester in Seoul, South Korea, and just the education that he gets by virtue of the travel and finding his way over there is incredible. So, were you at

Berkeley? You must not have been if you're here since 1984. But our VPR spent some time, John still, I think his one of his degrees is from Berkeley.

**Matthew Potteiger:** We've talked about that because we had the same professor for a class I took Luna Leopold was a really leading hydrologist, and I know John Stella has a hydrology degree and so.

**Joanie Mahoney:** We've compared notes.

**Matthew Potteiger:** We've compared notes and that the stream that he studied and in Berkeley I knew that stream. Yeah.

**Joanie Mahoney:** Isn't that interesting? You know, I was, I was thinking, listening to both of you talking, that if I put a map up in my office and put a push pin in the places where our faculty come from or have had experience, there's going to be a lot of pins in the Northwest. It's interesting that that place draws people here and vice versa.

**Anne Godfrey:** Yeah, in living there for so long, I there was a point in time where I was working towards my 20 year badge. I said to be an Oregonian, but I think that it's a place that's similar to here and that there's a desire to be out outside as much as possible.

**Joanie Mahoney:** That's what that's how it strikes me. I've visited, but I've never lived there. But they seem like a real outdoors people. A lot of activities that you see in the news are with people being outdoors.

**Anne Godfrey:** Yeah, it's just something that you do on the weekends. What's also interesting is that the landscape is so diverse in the Pacific Northwest and it's easy to get from one part of a diverse landscape and to another part within an hour, you know, 2 hours. And I think that it feels that way in New York as well. We're in this drumline landscape, but then you can get down into the Finger Lakes, which has a different characteristic, and that's like an hour away. You get up into the Adirondacks, you can get down.

**Matthew Potteiger:** Catskills goes not too far. And you mentioned travel and we're talking about, you know, just regional travel. That's another reason why I came here. And also I stayed here is we have in the landscape architecture program, we have probably one of the most unique, you could say, study abroad programs or off campus program where students go in small groups, really almost anywhere in the world and faculty work closely with them, and I've been the director of that program. I think, for 30 years. So that's been a really important part of my time here. And so, and most valuable things.

**Joanie Mahoney:** And are these trips that you take over school breaks or during the school year?

**Matthew Potteiger:** It's during the school year. So, the students are in a location for a whole semester. Typically, a fall semester. And we've been working with them for a whole year to prep for that. And then a faculty visit for about a week after the students have been there for four or five weeks. And we just work intensively with them on their projects and they show us the world that they've discovered and it's very different from some of these places are very well known places, but it's definitely off the tourist track.

**Joanie Mahoney:** What a fabulous opportunity for young people to be able to do this and for faculty to go see the world a week at a time and engage in these programs. I really admire people who describe their childhood and their passion and see a path that brings them to their career and spending their professional lives doing something that they really enjoyed doing. And especially for you Anne to say I was a did you say professional pruner and you were working in Japanese gardens and then to also have this interest in art and photography and to be able to put all of that together in this career that you have at ESF. In this knowledge that you're sharing with our students. It seems like a dream to me that you could take that array of interests and put it together the way you have. Is there somebody who was doing something like you're doing now, or is this a personal invention of yours to put photography field in this role in landscape architecture?

**Anne Godfrey:** So I am the the person who's been pursuing it consistently through a focus body of writing and research and keeping on going back to the primary points about opening up the container of photography and asking us to look at it in a much deeper way. Those other people who come before me, who have talked about photography and landscape architecture and certainly in larger humanities and arts, but I feel lucky to apply I think my humanitarian approach of understanding that what we make, be it a photograph, a drawing, how we tell a story is really has as much to do with our personal experience as it has to do with the subject matter that we're working with. So in that approach, what I'm doing is still unique in landscape architecture and then within larger environmental science and environmental design. So I use interesting when I talk about environmental design, this is how I define it. And it is that anybody who's engaged in the action or process of changing or managing a landscape system and when I say landscape system, that's really everything from, you know, down in the West Village in Manhattan to in the Adirondacks to somewhere north of the Arctic Circle, any of those are landscape places. So how does that fit into what do we do here at ESF? When I work with this array of students looking at photography and I have students in EFB, I have students in environmental studies, I have students in chemistry, I have students in landscape architecture. I started off by saying we're all environmental designers. We're all in some way, shape or form doing something in some way where we will alter the landscape. And I say alter in a really positive way that we're managing, we're protecting, we're understanding, we're designing in all those ways. So, photography is an act of environmental design, how that can

come together here. And what's really been great about being here at ESF is I can put that conversation into this entire disciplinary classroom environment and everybody can contribute something in a different way to that idea. And not only has that helped me expand my research and how I talk about things, but it helps the students. It helps one another in the classroom because they're like, oh, I never thought about it from your point of view, you know, that's fabulous.

**Joanie Mahoney:** Yeah.

**Anne Godfrey:** You're collecting insect specimens and you're making photographs of where they forage for food. And I'm over here measuring a plaza and making photographs of how people use this space during and a certain time of day. And those two actions, they sound very different, are actually very similar in terms of how do we look deeply at a place through these actions.

**Joanie Mahoney:** And, you know, that's one of the best things about ESF is that even though you can have these different majors, they've all come here with an appreciation for nature and the environment and speaking each other's language. So even though you have these diverse subject matter areas, they can understand it's not so different. And you talked about, I think, American history along the way. I don't know if you said American history, but.

**Anne Godfrey:** American studies was my area. But American history and in American environmental.

**Joanie Mahoney:** History, the reason I was coming back to that is because that seems like a big, important part of landscape architecture is understanding the history of the place, in addition to what the landscape looks like and what's there. And it seems like there's a component of history that is crucial to it that I'm not sure lay people understand.

**Anne Godfrey:** Yeah, so there's many ways to uncover the history of the places that we work with. And I like to say histories. So, there's multiple histories that lay on top of one another and overlap or are connected or sit next to each other. And by understanding that there are histories, that means that there's lots of different people who have made places over time. If we go back to photography, we can look at those histories by going into archives, by looking at individual personal collections that people bring to the table. When we work on projects. That's always really fascinating situation, but also that the idea of those histories are presented in different ways by different people through either telling stories, which is what math looks at with his work or with my work in the way that they photograph those places over time and what they choose to photograph or what they choose not to photograph, which also gets into the idea that there's histories or multiple histories that are told or sometimes need to be actively uncovered because they have been covered up over time.

**Joanie Mahoney:** So why is the history important to the work that you're doing? Because when I come to a place and I see it and I don't know that history, the history has informed it, but how do you use that knowledge about the histories in your work?

**Matthew Potteiger:** So this histories ties in to what been. One of my other main focus here, which is the idea of narrative and landscape. So, histories are kind of narrative. They're stories that are told for different ways by different people for different purposes. That's one of these cultural practices that I focus on, that cultural practices make places or any ordinary culture, ordinary practices like telling stories. And so I took that idea, well, if we tell stories, how do they start to shape landscapes and how do we tell those stories? So I did a whole series of research and publication on landscape narratives, ways to document or find these stories, and methods. I use this method called Stories Circles coming into community. Yeah. So what are the stories here? Just looking at it. They may provide clues, but people may read it in those stories as clues in very different ways, depending on their experience. So a story circle, for instance, is a method where you just get people together and in a circle and you say, okay, you each have like a minute or 2 minutes to tell your story, maybe around a theme or about this place. And everybody listens. And when they're done, they can have a dialog and it's a way to have some sharing and collective understanding of stories. It's actually a method I learned from John O'Neal, who was doing civil rights movement. He was the cultural attaché and he did community theater and this was a method he used for developing community theater.

**Joanie Mahoney:** It would be such an interesting conversation to sit people around and say, "What's your story about here?" Because as you said, different people have different experiences that they take from the same time and place.

**Matthew Potteiger:** We've have used this method in part of my community engagement, different projects, like in Newburyport, Massachusetts, we had a story circle out on this one parking lot that was where they were looking at how to redevelopment or redevelop it or preserve it. And in the story circles, the first time that leader of the Chamber of Commerce, the mayor and the person in the preservation group actually got together outside of a public meeting where it's usually contentious, which you probably are familiar with.

**Joanie Mahoney:** I've heard.

**Matthew Potteiger:** And where they actually listened to each other stories of, Oh, I didn't know that.

**Joanie Mahoney:** So interesting.

**Matthew Potteiger:** That's the way to start to build some common understandings outside of agendas.

**Joanie Mahoney:** Yeah, we have regularly occurring points of friction between and among the groups that you're talking about. You know, just this past Sunday there was a story about one of the iconic historic buildings in downtown Syracuse and, you know, the preservation perspective on the renovation and the mayor's and the county executive's and the developers and then the community servants really, that are protecting this history. It is interesting to take them out of that and then just sit down and actually listen to each other. And where are you coming from and why is this important to you? I understand people's motivations. So. So how does that work that you're doing translate into the food work that you've been doing?

**Matthew Potteiger:** It comes from the same place, like I mentioned when I traveled across the country and I saw all these cultural these differences, like, how does this happen? So just trying to understand ordinary things that people do. And out of that we create landscapes and create meaning. So, telling stories is one of these things. Eating is one of those very ordinary cultural social practices which we don't think about too much, but it's probably one of the most intimate interactions that we have with ecologies and places. It's just that we're disconnected. We don't know where our food is coming from. We don't know what the impacts are of what we eat.

**Joanie Mahoney:** You mean before Wegmans?

**Matthew Potteiger:** Yes. Yeah, absolutely. And it's also one of those fundamental things that, you know, we eat around a table and forms social relationships. So I was thinking that this is if we're going to talk about sustainability or culture and landscape and the meaning of place, we should look at food and landscape.

**Joanie Mahoney:** Absolutely and it seems obvious now that you're doing it, but to have that foresight and do some of the work, the first place that I saw you after I came here to ESF was down at the regional market when you were making an announcement. You can tell us what that work is that you were doing with the city of Syracuse.

**Matthew Potteiger:** Yeah, I got funding from the Agriculture Council for the county, which you establish.

**Joanie Mahoney:** I did.

**Matthew Potteiger:** I went to every meeting and I had built some of the networks in the AG Council and, and the purpose of our council was to start to bring in people from different parts of the food system together as farmers, but also people who



were running super managing supermarkets, but also people with food pantries.

**Joanie Mahoney:** And I'll just interrupt you for one second and say I'm so happy that you did know what that was intended to do. But it also was recognizing the huge part of our local economy that is agriculture. And again, I'm not sure people were aware of that, but my philosophy was to put the structure in place and put the funding behind it, but let the experts actually dictate what projects got funding and then how the council itself was going to work. And it's one of the places that I have the most pride in and the least amount of day-to-day involvement. And I think it's probably a lesson for local government officials down the road is to just put the structure in place on what the experts do the work and to find out years later now that I'm up here at ESF, that you were one of the people that was getting funding. It just makes it seem like such a huge success.

**Matthew Potteiger:** Yeah, just getting people together. And it became evident that, yeah, there is no food system, there's no people are doing their different things and there wasn't coordinate. And this is typical. Almost every community across the country. Yeah, there's a department is managing transportation or even parking there, but nothing about food. And so it came evident that there needed to be some more comprehensive, collaborative look at the food system. So, they gave some funding to generate a food system plan. It was the first food system plan for Onondaga County and Syracuse. And in the process with interviews, over 50 interviews with different stakeholders, everything from the largest dairy farmer in the county to one of the smallest dairy farmers, but who was also implementing best management practices so that the run off from the farm that didn't impact the water quality of Skaneateles lake, which Syracuse gets its drinking water from. So you start to build the value, the interconnectedness of a food system to environment, to economics, to business development, and public health. Another thing we looked at was food access and so-called food deserts in Syracuse, basically places that have experienced systematic and structural disenfranchisement and disparities. And it plays out in food. So, the places that were redlined in the 1930s, those are the places that have not had a grocery store since the 1970s. So full generation growing up in that that those kind of conditions.

**Joanie Mahoney:** It's horrible and it's a lot of convenience stores and wrong for a lot of reasons. But it also is a lot of parents lugging small children on a not efficient mass transit system to get themselves to a grocery store that had produce. It's just awful. Some progress has been made, but your project looked at our food systemically and highlighted the places where we need to do better. Is that right?

**Matthew Potteiger:** Yes. First of all, I wanted to mention that my work on the food plan scene while I was with a close colleague, Evan Weissman, who died right as we were finishing the plan. So I definitely want to recognize Evan's work with that. So,

yeah, we went through all the different sectors from producing to processing, marketing and consumption. Look, the impacts on health, etc. And we did come up with recommendations and I'm glad to say that some of them are they're happening. One of the recommendations was to create some kind of ongoing entity that would continue food system coordination and planning. So out of that came some Syracuse Onondaga Food System alliance. And they're doing really well now. They've gotten some good USDA grants for continued planning. They're focusing now on some of the promoting the regional market along with more equitable food access. That's great. That's been one of the things that came out of it. One other key recommendation was importance of distribution network and warehouses that in the 1960s, pretty much all the food that came into Onondaga County or Syracuse came through the regional market. But now that's been replaced by the private retail food distribution centers of Wegmans and the other supermarkets. So we've lost that public space in the food system.

**Joanie Mahoney:** Yeah, and it was important for the community to have. Is there a way to get it back?

**Matthew Potteiger:** Yeah, that's one thing SOFSA is looking at and how do we promote the infrastructure of distribution? We have generations of distributors. I can name, Russo --

**Joanie Mahoney:** I was going to say. Russo Yeah, you can see I can see the sign and the regional market. It's right there prominently Russo produce.

**Matthew Potteiger:** And they are great and they're community minded and they see the value of food distribution not just as a business but as a community enterprise. We're really fortunate during COVID that we had people with that experience and generations of experience that they were actually able to get some USDA funding to and aggregate and coordinate farmers and with restaurants. And they were the people who helped to get fresh produce to meet a very sudden, unexpected need. And they actually started distributing to other places in the East Coast because of their expertise. And so, they're really valuable.

**Joanie Mahoney:** We're really lucky.

**Matthew Potteiger:** Yeah. And we don't see them because they're in there in the middle of the food system. They're not the markets and not the farmers.

**Joanie Mahoney:** So and they play that crucial role. How do you two then listening to your work Anne and listening to your work Matt, I know you work together. Where does that come? Where do you work together?

**Anne Godfrey:** Well, I think our foundational understanding of how we work is where we come together. I'll go back to that. We both are grounded in the humanities

and the way that we approach our work. We're interested in how people interact with one another and community and relationships that way. So it seems to me that man and I just have this like underlying value set that sits really we kind of can get it in terms of like people matter, stories matter, different experiences matter. The experiences maybe we don't hear about as often matter.

**Matthew Potteiger:** I think the way you define design as people making choices of what to photograph. That's a design decision. And so this broader definition of what design is and that it matters, it's how landscapes get shaped and it opens up a lot of new possibilities for designers to get engaged with communities through these different cultural practices with us photographing her or eating.

**Anne Godfrey:** And as Matt was talking earlier, something that I was thinking a lot about is that food and kind of where it comes from or photographic images and that there, you know, all over the place we take that for granted. Both of those systems, they're both derived out of people's experiences and needs. I would argue photography is as much expressive of needs as how and why food is made and where it's available, and that maybe we both look at things that people maybe don't always think are important to look at, or those underlying parts of a system that are crucial. Yet not necessarily, you know, the obvious in-your-face kinds of things. So about like communication is now why we're here doing this right? In certain ways, the process of communication is maybe even taken for granted. But if we start to pull apart how it works or what our underlying motivations or what are some of the cultural paradigms that determine what we do, then we can start to better understand and I think, make things better, more meaningful, instead of kind of continuing along the same route of, you know, food being less accessible historically in certain areas, and let's take that apart and look at that or in terms of who is photographed or what types of landscapes are photographed and valued and that there's actually a way more landscapes than the narrow types of landscapes we see repeatedly photographed over and over.

**Joanie Mahoney:** I know, and I so appreciate people like you that do that. That is not a natural thing for me. I have to stop and remind myself to pay attention to the details and to look for the things that maybe aren't obvious and to pay attention. And for somebody like you to be doing that in a deliberative way and making sure that the rest of us are seeing some of those things is so important and I really appreciate it. And the older I get, the more I've tried to make myself like that. I've tried to be present, I've tried to look around, see what I see, and then try to think about what are we not seeing as you just described. It's very, very interesting. So have you actually worked together? Is there photography that's a component of the work that you've done?

**Matthew Potteiger:** Yes, actually in different ways of engaging communities to do their own photographic enterprise. Part of one thing we did for working with the new

American refugees actually for developing a farm at the edge of the at the edge of Syracuse, we gave them cameras. For a week they just photo documented food where they got the food, how they cooked the food, how they eat the food, and then we used that all these as part of a community meal. We actually used them for the first pop up meal that Adam Sudmann did for what eventually became a series of pop ups and then became the Salt City Market. So yeah, so it's kind of a community photography project.

**Joanie Mahoney:** That's so interesting.

**Matthew Potteiger:** Yeah, it was very interesting. We wouldn't have known things otherwise. We wouldn't have known the Ethiopian refugees go to Rochester and get their coffee and roasted on their stove in the kitchen. But we have and.

**Joanie Mahoney:** It's just coffee ever in the world. Yeah. You know, that is reminding me too. We had no fishing signs at all, like a lake. And we had, you know, danger, high mercury levels, all of those things written in English. And there are thousands of new American refugees in our community that were fishing and were not able to read those signs. And it's one of the things that you could easily overlook if somebody wasn't paying attention and saying, you know, this is where this community is getting its food and you need to communicate better with this community, You're both nodding. So I wonder if you had heard that our signs were in English.

**Matthew Potteiger:** I've seen the signs translated. It sort of relates to another project I'm working on with the I work with the New American. Well and other anyone with foraging practices and gathering plants and mushrooms in the city. So, we had a Syracuse Urban Food for Forest project with Stew Demand here, ESF and also Arnie Bellows at ASU in the food studies program. So we're looking for is broken down Onondaga Creek as an ecological infrastructure that produces food. And that's actually how in and I also connected.

**Joanie Mahoney:** How did you play a role in that Anne?

**Anne Godfrey:** Matt and I both have a love of food not only for understanding others, access to it and kind of all the cultural food ways, but just in terms of making food. So, when I came to interview here, Matt was my assigned faculty steward, I guess, and he found that landscape.

**Matthew Potteiger:** Yeah.

**Joanie Mahoney:** Well, congratulations for his job well done, because here you are.

**Anne Godfrey:** Right. And he very quickly found out that I was a lover of food and wanting to know more about regional food. So he switched our day around and we ended up spending a lot of time in Cazenovia and kind of driving the back roads,

looking at different parts of the landscape. And we ended up at the art park and it was ramp season and there are no ramps in Oregon. And we he showed me where they were. Showed me how to pick one or dig it up. And that was beginning of me going, “Wow”, this is a pretty interesting food way here. And it was really.

**Joanie Mahoney:** There's an annual, I think, article that we can read about ramp season, right? But myself, I have not participated in it. Is that something you do annually?

**Matthew Potteiger:** Annually. We started doing a project with Syracuse Urban Food Forest project where we've been, it's public event, where we're even transplanting ramps from a place in Cazenovia Critz farm, and we've been transplanting them into part of Elmwood Park, where there's some invasive periwinkle digging out periwinkle and transplanting ramps since the way it has really built some public awareness of that amazing, amazing plant.

**Joanie Mahoney:** I have a tip for you. There's a city councilor that lives adjacent to Elmwood Park, and he's a big proponent of doing right by Elmwood Park. So if you need anything, you'll have to look for Tim Rudd. Whenever I see him. We talk about Elmwood Park. He feels like the luckiest person because it's not that well-known a place in the city and it's spectacularly beautiful. But you're kind of reminding me when you talked about the invasive species, you started out talking in about the Japanese gardens and I'm curious because I have heard very different things, but do we ever properly plant invasive species or is that something to be avoided all the time?

**Anne Godfrey:** Oh, boy. There's a complex answer to that complicated question.

**Joanie Mahoney:** Well, maybe that's why I've gotten such different answers. But, you know, you see the Japanese maple trees. I'm assuming if they're Japanese maples, that they're not indigenous and they're beautiful. But should we be planting them?

**Anne Godfrey:** So, there's a few different ways to think about it. One is Japanese maples don't suppress other species. So I would say less of an issue. There isn't a major swap out of one type of species that people are choosing Japanese maples, of which there are many different subspecies that we don't see. There's a mass of replacement that is then somehow causing negative effects to occur in the larger landscape system.

**Joanie Mahoney:** That makes sense.

**Anne Godfrey:** But let's let's pick another species and we'll talk about it regionally here versus in the Pacific Northwest. So English ivy here, not a terrible plant is used in certain situations in a way where it can be controlled. English Ivy in Oregon is listed as a noxious weed because it will take over understory ground species. It has chemicals in its root structure that disallow other plants to germinate, and

it seasonally thrives there because there is no deep winter or low temperatures to hold it back.

**Joanie Mahoney:** So, it can really crowd everything else out.

**Anne Godfrey:** Yeah. So.

**Joanie Mahoney:** So, you just said not terrible. So then I guess my question is, should we be doing it or ideally are we not doing it at all? But there are some that are less harmful than others.

**Anne Godfrey:** I think that there's some plants are harmful and they shouldn't be planted. And the other plants, it's right place, right plant, right situation. There's a couple of other things, you know, that are underneath us is that as the climate warms, we see migration of species. So that starts to be part of the conversation. If we see a plant species and that's what we're talking about, starting to be able to thrive further and further north. Do we think of it as invasive or do we think about it as things are starting to shift? And how do we understand that a whole system is starting to shift?

**Joanie Mahoney:** But that's different than planting English Ivy in Oregon?

**Anne Godfrey:** Yes, but that's different than planting English ivy in Oregon, which is you aren't you can't even purchase that in Oregon. So.

**Joanie Mahoney:** You know, that's one of the issues here is I think there's a lot of people that want to do the right thing by way of mitigating climate change and protecting our natural environments. But they go to a nursery to buy plants and they don't go with the depth of knowledge that you and others have. And so, something looks great and they're told that it can be in region five or whatever the right hardiness is, and then they take it home and plant it and are causing trouble and aren't aware of it.

**Anne Godfrey:** Right. And that's where it's still it's really complex. So humans have for as long as we have documented it, utilize plants to create places. And the utilization of that plants has been from agricultural uses and that plants are found in one place and brought to another place. And then they do really well and they become a food source. Maybe not from that place. Humans have found certain types of plants, for example, trees to be very beautiful or provide shade, and so they are introduced or brought into a situation where we would like to create an environment where we have shade and that those trees might not be what you would just see themselves. They're that's been the way that humans have in one of many ways, that humans have altered their landscape spaces to make them places where they want to be. So those are all acts of design. So, I think it gets complicated to today kind of do a yes no, can't do it. Yes, I should do that. No, I cannot do that. Yes, that's okay. No, that's not okay. I

think for me it's like, what is the specific situation? What are the specific goals? What is the larger landscape system? And then we can start making choices. But to say, you know, no, you know, Norway Maples No. So, you know, maybe there's a better choice sometimes. Maybe it's a choice that should not be made.

**Joanie Mahoney:** So, I would say you haven't cleared it up for me. Yeah, yeah. No, it's I understand. It's now, it is a very complex question, and it depends on so many other factors along the way. So, where you going To muddy.

**Matthew Potteiger:** The waters even more. Okay. When you look at urban landscapes, for instance. Yeah, it's a very human impact in landscape. And so, looking at edible plants and foraging, urban foraging, there's a lot of edible quote, weeds. The new American refugees that I work with, it was the first time took them out to the farm and they went right to the edge of the farm and started gathering stinging nettle, which is native, but then Lamb's quarter, purslane - things that they were familiar with in the refugee camps in Nepal and also in the wild landscapes in Bhutan. But now they're finding them here in Syracuse. So, there's these novel ecologies that may make sense in extremely altered landscapes, and they're actually fairly resilient and then we may need to we could learn something about these what's happening these in these ecologies during climate change because there are some resilience strategies and we can look at their ecological functions. And at the same time, yeah, there's these these problems of loss of pollinator. And so it is a complex problem.

**Joanie Mahoney:** I did pitch to Mayor Walsh this No Mow May to try to protect the pollinators, but I haven't convinced him yet. But maybe if he listens to this and understands the value of the pollinators. You know, I have another question based on what you just said, though. You talked about edible weeds whose job is it to deem something a weed or not a weed?

**Matthew Potteiger:** It's one of those cultural categories. It's something that's basically it's a plant that's in a in a different context. It's so out of place.

**Joanie Mahoney:** So with the new American refugees in Bhutan be calling it a weed?

**Matthew Potteiger:** No.

**Joanie Mahoney:** Yeah, it's a food source. Right. And I've often wondered that about, you know, daisies and dandelions and who picked which one was a flower that we need to buy at the florist and which one was supposed to be mowed by.

**Matthew Potteiger:** All those definitions? Grass as a weed. Grass is there. It's an imported species, it's been propagated extended and it.

**Joanie Mahoney:** And it's horrible for the environment. I have learned from speaking with the folks at the Restoration Science Center, and we should all have native plants that are better for the water quality, better for the pollinators. Again, it's this interdisciplinary conversation that we have at ESF that is part of what makes us so special. We have these opportunities to learn from each other too, right?

**Anne Godfrey:** Yeah. And I think it comes into this idea of systems thinking that we need to think about everything is interrelated. And so even though we might be thinking about one particular species, there is a, there's an interrelated system and all parts of the system are affected in one way, shape or form. And that we also need to remember that humans are always a part of that system, and that is we think about how to handle issues of climate change that humans aren't. We can't exclude ourselves at all from that.

**Joanie Mahoney:** And can't is the right word. We should or shouldn't, but it's not ultimately up to us.

**Anne Godfrey:** Right. And that we also have to understand that there is no such thing as pristine wilderness or environment, that everything is interrelated. And so when we go back to like, is English Ivy good or bad, it's all about the system that it's in and the situation that it's in. And we can say that for so many different species, including ourselves.

**Matthew Potteiger:** Yes. So, we're factoring in cultural aspects in these systems, which sometimes, you know, may not be included or not looked at in a certain kind of depths. That's why I'm following foragers and people foraging. They're finding value in what's been considered weeds or abandoned landscapes, marginalized landscapes. Well, no, actually, there might be something here. Maybe, But maybe we can do it differently. Maybe we can look at it in a more sustainable way. We might learn from it. That's mostly what my interest is. And maybe Anne's, I think, too, is photography's learning from what people are doing.

**Joanie Mahoney:** And to have a career like both of you have, where you have the opportunity to learn something new all the time, must be just a wonderful way to spend your professional lives. And I feel like I could talk to you for a lot longer. But we've come to the end and I feel back to where I was, where you're talking about systems and that's the paying attention and seeing the things that are obvious to the rest of us. And thankfully we have you out there paying attention to those things. So, thank you both very much. And Godfrey and Matt Pottinger, thank you for taking time and sitting and talking with us now.

**Anne Godfrey:** Thank you.

**Matthew Potteiger:** Great conversation. Thanks for bringing this together.



