



Gardening with native plants, networking our gardens

A community of gardeners, birds, pollinators, and gorgeous gardens

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 - “the cellist on the porch”
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 - Volunteer leader for Upshur Green Garden Playground since 2012
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What’s a native plant? ➤ Planting for pollinators ➤ Planting for birds ➤ Other benefits of planting native | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Native plant networks ➤ The balance of nature ➤ Flower to tempt you ➤ Plant native, not invasive ➤ Designing a native plant garden |
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What’s a native plant?

- Indigenous to the area when Europeans first came. Found there within a specified time frame: e.g., when Europeans arrived
- Native plants co-evolved with local insects, birds, and other critters:
 - They feed each other, provide homes and protection
 - They keep each other from getting out of control
 - They evolved in the local climate and local soils (such as our local clay)

Why do we want to plant native?

- Encourage birds (which need insects!)
- Encourage butterflies, bees, and other pollinators
- Encourage beneficial insects
- Support a varied, balanced ecological web of life

Planting for pollinators

- Why do we care about pollinators?
 - Without pollination, we wouldn’t have most foods!
 - Sunflower seeds, cashews, almonds, apples, mangoes, lemons, cherries, blackberries, potatoes, peas, beans, coffee beans, honey, CHOCOLATE (cacao), and many more plants that we might not eat but other animals do.

Some types of pollinators

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Native bees (Bumble, Carpenter, Miner, Sweat, Mason bee) ○ Beetles ○ Flies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wasps ○ Ants ○ Bats ○ Hummingbirds and Honeybees (non-native) |
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Butterfly/Moth Host Plants

- Butterflies and moths get nectar from many flowers, but many require specific “host” plants for their caterpillars.

Host plants (a sampling)

- goldenrods, asters, joe pie weed, boneset, native violets, pussytoes, black-eyed Susan, bee balms
- milkweeds (the host for monarchs)
- Sedges and grasses
- Birch, willow, cherry, oak, and other trees
- Spicebush for spicebush swallowtails
- Pawpaws for zebra swallowtails

Planting for Birds

But I only care about birds...

If you plant it, they will come!

Birds need:

- Seeds, berries, and lots of insects, especially when they are raising young and when they are preparing to migrate.
- Caterpillars!
- Cover for raising young
- Cover during bad weather
- Red trumpet-shaped flowers for hummingbirds

Some easy-to-grow food sources for birds

- Seeds: wild bergamot, lyreleaf sage, coneflower
- Berries: Arrowwood, Winterberry, American Beautyberry, Serviceberry, Chokeberry, Elderberry
- Cardinal flowers, native honeysuckle, bee balm (for hummers)
- And anything that the caterpillars will eat...
- Nest materials, shelter too!

A single pair of breeding chickadees must catch 7500 caterpillars to rear one clutch of young.

Berry-bearing Shrubs for Birds

- American Beautyberry (Callicarpa Americana)
- Red or Black Chokeberry (Aronia spp.)
- Winterberry (Ilex verticillate)
- Arrowwood (Viburnum dentatum)
- Elderberry (Sambucus canadensis)
- Spicebush (Lindera benzoin)





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Other benefits of planting native

- To learn about where we live
- To have a garden that doesn't require chemicals
- To have gardens that require LESS WATERING!
- So we don't have to mow the lawn!

And also

- To help keep our yards and neighborhood from flooding when it rains a lot.
- To protect the rivers and the Chesapeake Bay

Stormwater, flooding, pollution, erosion, and mosquitos

- One of the biggest problems for homeowners in the area is flooding –
 - in basements, in the street – and
 - pooled water that helps mosquitos.
- Stormwater can erode gardens, washing away all our hard work.
- One of the biggest problems for our rivers and the Chesapeake Bay is stormwater runoff, which is
 - polluted with chemical fertilizer, organic waste, and oils.
- Turf grass does not absorb heavy rainfall; water runs off onto sidewalks and streets.
- Native plants help water infiltrate even our clay soil, purifying the water, minimizing erosion, and storing water.

Native plant networks

Creating a native plant network

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building community, and community identity • Learning from each other • Showcasing native plants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing off our yards • Creating habitat corridors and stepping stones • Combatting habitat fragmentation |
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The biggest problem for our natural world is the loss of suitable habitat: not only from the loss of wild areas but from the fragmentation of habitat.

Habitat fragmentation

- “Habitat fragmentation is a major problem across the Earth. ... A decrease in the overall area of wild places is bad enough.
- But combined with fragmentation, it can undermine the integrity of whole ecosystems.
- Roads, urbanization, and agriculture are some of the main activities that break up natural areas.
- This often has disastrous impacts on wildlife.”





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When we create a native plant network using our gardens, we help to create corridors, buffers, and stepping stones.

“Conservationists use a range of techniques to help increase connectivity in fragmented landscapes. These include creating corridors, buffers, and stepping stones to help wildlife move around.”

- [Habitat fragmentation and its effects | Trees for Life](#)

A movement to create native plant networks

“HOMEGROWN NATIONAL PARK® A grassroots call-to-action to regenerate biodiversity and ecosystem function by planting native plants and creating a new ecological network

Regenerate biodiversity and ecosystem function because every human being on this planet needs diverse highly productive ecosystems to survive.”

- *Doug Tallamy: “Our National Parks, no matter how grand in scale is too small and separated from one another to preserve species to the levels needed. Thus, the concept for Homegrown National Park, a bottom-up call-to-action to restore habitat where we live and work, and to a lesser extent where we farm and graze, extending national parks to our yards and communities.”*
<https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>

The balance of nature

Nature exists in balance

- A mix of native plants supports insects that control aphids and other pests.
- Beneficial insects include Lady Beetles, Lacewings, Braconid Wasps, Hover Flies
A plant that has fed nothing has not done its job.” – Doug Tallamy

What’s eating my beautiful plant?

Some damage to plants is inevitable and, in fact, desirable. Butterflies lay eggs on the leaves of plants that their caterpillars will eat. No “host plants,” no butterflies!

(Leafcutter bees leave distinctive evidence: they cut out circles of the leaf as building materials for their nests.)





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Flowers to tempt you

(Just a sampling. Special thanks to Liz Marshall!) Spring-flowering: Spiderwort, Golden Alexander, Virginia Bluebells, False Blue Indigo, Canada Anemone, Eastern Columbine, Woodland Phlox, Golden Groundsel, Dwarf Crested Iris, Mayapple, Rue Anemone

Summer-flowering: Bee Balm, White Turtlehead, Great Blue Lobelia, Spotted Bee Balm, Evening Primrose, Nodding Onion, Black-eyed Susan, Rose Mallow, Blazing Star, Ironweed, Wild Bergamot, Hoary Skullcap, Giant Hyssop, Short-toothed Mountain Mint, Joe Pye weed, Brown-eyed Susan, Sneezeweed

Fall-flowering: Asters (New England, Aromatic, etc.); Goldenrods (Wreath, Showy, etc.); Mistflower

It's not just about flowers

- Grasses
- Sedges
- Ferns
- Shrubs
- Trees

Plant native, not invasive

But I love my (rose of Sharon, wisteria, English ivy, butterfly bush, and honeysuckle)!

- Non-native plants are not part of the web of life.
- Non-native plants do not stay put in our yards.
- Plants are easily dispersed by birds and mammals, in the wind, and on our shoes.
- Invasive species compete directly with native species for moisture, sunlight, nutrients, and space.
- Invasive plants produce monocultures.

What is an invasive plant?

As per Executive Order 13112 (1999) an "invasive species" is defined as a species that is:

1. non-native (or alien) to the ecosystem under consideration and
2. whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.

Native Alternatives to Invasive Plants

~~Rose of Sharon~~ Rose Mallow
~~Privet~~ Arrowwood (and other native viburnums)
~~Japanese Wisteria~~ American Wisteria
~~Burning Bush~~ Native Euonymus (Hearts-a-Bursting)
~~Nandina~~ Winterberry





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Designing a native plant garden

Design Tips

- Plant for blooms in all seasons
 - Use all layers—groundcovers, herbaceous layer, shrub layer, and canopy layers
 - Provide a variety of bloom sizes, colors, and shapes
 - Include grasses for structure and texture (and as host plants!)
- Plant densely
- Group similar plants together in “drifts”
 - Keep the peace: allelopathy
 - Better visibility to pollinators
- Keep your plants on a scale
 - Be aware of height, spread, aggressiveness
- Define your edges
- Be firm with aggressive plants
 - Be prepared to move or weed out volunteers and suckers

Take an excursion

- Fern Valley, National Arboretum (3 miles away)
- Adkins Arboretum (Eastern Shore)
- Chesapeake Natives Open House (Upper Marlboro)
- Native Gardens at the University of Maryland (College Park)
- Mount Cuba (Hockessin, Delaware)

Look for the signs (in your neighborhood)

Read great books and websites

- Doug Tallamy books
- Sources from Maryland Native Plant Society <https://mdflora.org/publications>
- Extensión en Español Blogs de Extensión de la Universidad de Maryland <https://extensionesp.umd.edu/>
- Volunteer with us on the weekend at The Blue Playground, Upshur & 34th Street

Join us for a few minutes or a couple of hours, Saturday or Sunday mornings at the Upshur “blue” playground. Learn about gardening with natives, identify plants, and get some freebies!

