



GREEN SPRING GARDENS

4603 GREEN SPRING ROAD • ALEXANDRIA • VIRGINIA
22312

PHONE: (703) 642-5173 • FAX: (703) 642-8095

WWW.FAIRFAXCOUNTY/PARKS/GSGP

RECOMMENDED NATIVE HERBACEOUS PERENNIALS AND FERNS FOR SHADE GARDENS IN THE WASHINGTON, D.C. AREA

Native plants are species that existed in Virginia before Jamestown, Virginia was founded in 1607. They are uniquely adapted to local conditions. Native plants provide food and shelter for a myriad of birds, butterflies, and other wildlife. Best of all, gardeners can feel the satisfaction of preserving a part of our natural heritage while enjoying the beauty of native plants in the garden.

Hardy herbaceous perennials form little or no woody tissue and live for several years. Some of these plants are short-lived and may live only three years, such as wild columbine, while others can live for decades. They are a group of plants that gardeners are very passionate about because of their lovely foliage and flowers, as well as their wide variety of textures, forms, and heights. Most of these plants are deciduous and die back to the ground in the winter. However, some species are semi-evergreen or evergreen, such as heartleaf or evergreen wild ginger (*Hexastylis* species). Ferns, in contrast, have no flowers but grace our gardens with their beautiful foliage.

Herbaceous perennials and ferns are a joy to garden with because they are easily moved to create new design combinations and provide an ever-changing scene in the garden. They are appropriate for a wide range of shade gardens, from more formal gardens to naturalistic woodland gardens.

The following are useful definitions:

- **Cultivar (cv.)** – a cultivated variety designated by single quotes, such as 'Blue Pearl'. A **variety (var.)** or **subspecies (subsp.)**, in contrast, is found in nature and is a subdivision of a species.
- Full shade – the amount of light under a dense deciduous tree canopy or beneath evergreens.
- Naturalistic use – native plants that, when properly sited, perform well with minimal care; best used in an informal design that suggests a natural landscape. Most native species can be used this way, but this is the best way to use some species with informal growth habits or certain species that reseed readily. Woodland gardens are a wonderful way to use natives in this fashion.
- Part shade – the amount of light in an area shaded part of the day, among deciduous trees with high branches, among deciduous trees with foliage that is not heavy, or among thinned deciduous woods.

The following is a list of native herbaceous perennials and ferns with ornamental value that perform well in shade gardens in the Washington, D.C. area. These plants tolerate or prefer varying degrees of shade. Most of these plants are native to Virginia; it is noted if they are not native to Virginia. Plants that are not native to Virginia are found in other southeastern states. Most of these plants prefer a moist, well-drained site. Light requirements, special cultural requirements or tolerances, and if a plant is semi-evergreen or evergreen are noted in the comments column. Plants that require wet sites are not included, such as skunk cabbage. Help conserve native plant populations by buying only propagated plants: do not buy plants collected from the wild. The North Carolina Botanical Garden has an excellent website about native plant nurseries for our region - **Recommended Plant Sources**

for Native Plants (<http://ncbg.unc.edu/pages/48/>). The Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society also sells plants twice a year at Green Spring (in May and September).

The following plant information sheets list the month(s) of bloom, flower color, and any fall color for the perennials growing in the Virginia Native Plant Garden at Green Spring Gardens, as well as fall color for a few ferns:

- **Ornamental Plants with Spring Bloom in the Virginia Native Plant Garden**
- **Ornamental Plants with Summer Bloom and Fruit in the Virginia Native Plant Garden**
- **September, October, and November in the Virginia Native Plant Garden: Bloom, Fruit, and Fall Color of Foliage**

In addition, native ornamental grasses and sedges for shade are covered in another plant information sheet (these documents are available in our Horticulture Center and on the Green Spring website):

- **Recommended Hardy Ornamental Grasses and Sedges for Gardens in the Washington, D.C. Area.**

NATIVE HERBACEOUS PERENNIALS

Scientific Name	Common Name	Comments
<i>Actaea racemosa</i> (recently changed to this by USDA; still sold under older name - <i>Cimicifuga racemosa</i>)	Black Snakeroot, Black Bugbane, Fairy Candles	Light shade to part shade; likes calcium - add gypsum or lime when planting; some reseeding
<i>Antennaria plantaginifolia</i>	Plantain Pussytoes	Full sun to light shade; prefers dry sites; reseeds readily
<i>Aquilegia canadensis</i>	Wild Columbine	Full sun to part shade; individual plants short-lived so allow reseeding; tolerates dry sites
<i>Aralia racemosa</i>	Spikenard	Light shade to part shade; reseeds readily
<i>Arisaema triphyllum</i>	Jack-in-the-Pulpit	Light shade to part shade; can go dormant in the summer; do not crowd or will be short-lived; some reseeding
<i>Aruncus dioicus</i>	Goatsbeard	Light shade to part shade
<i>Asarum canadense</i>	Wild Ginger	Light shade to full shade; likes moist sites - evergreen wild gingers (now classified as <i>Hexastylis</i>) are more tolerant of dry conditions
<i>Aster</i> - old name that is still commonly used; botanists have now divided American asters into different genera: <i>A. cordifolius</i> (<i>Symphotrichum cordifolium</i>) <i>A. divaricatus</i> (<i>Eurybia divaricata</i>) <i>A. macrophyllus</i> (<i>Eurybia macrophylla</i>)	Heart-leaved Aster White Wood Aster Large-leaved Aster	Light shade to part shade; tolerate dry sites; <i>A. cordifolius</i> & <i>A. divaricata</i> are best used in naturalistic plantings, larger areas, & dry areas – reseed readily
<i>Astilbe biternata</i>	False Goatsbeard	Light shade to part shade

<i>Caltha palustris</i>	Marsh Marigold	Light shade to part shade in constantly moist or wet sites; spring ephemeral (summer dormant)
<i>Cardamine concatenata</i> (<i>Dentaria laciniata</i>)	Cutleaf Toothwort	Light shade to part shade; spring ephemeral (summer dormant); naturalistic use; some reseeding
<i>Caulophyllum thalictroides</i>	Blue Cohosh	Light shade to part shade
<i>Chelone glabra</i> ('Black Ace') <i>C. obliqua</i>	White Turtlehead Pink Turtlehead	Full sun to light shade in moist or wet sites; some reseeding
<i>Chrysogonum virginianum</i> Note: var. <i>australe</i> is more vigorous but blooms less – this variety is native to GA & other southeastern states	Green and Gold	Light shade to part shade (can take full sun in moist sites when taller plants shade it somewhat); needs good drainage
<i>Claytonia virginica</i>	Spring Beauty	Light shade to part shade; spring ephemeral (summer dormant); naturalistic use
<i>Collinsonia canadensis</i>	Northern Horse Balm	Light shade to part shade; naturalistic use; light reseeding
<i>Coreopsis major</i>	Woodland Coreopsis	Full sun to light shade; tolerates dry sites
<i>Delphinium exaltatum</i> <i>D. tricornis</i> (a spring ephemeral – summer dormant)	Tall Delphinium Dwarf Delphinium	Light shade best; likes calcium - add limestone or gypsum to soil when planting; <i>D. tricornis</i> is best for naturalistic use – only grows for a short period in the spring
<i>Dicentra eximia</i> Note: <i>D. cucullaria</i> (Dutchman's breeches) is a spring ephemeral (summer dormant) & best for naturalistic use	Wild Bleeding Heart	Light shade to part shade; <i>D. eximia</i> tolerates dry sites, has a long bloom period, & reseeds readily
<i>Enemion biternatum</i> (<i>Isopyrum biternatum</i>)	False Rue Anemone	Light shade to part shade; spring ephemeral (summer dormant) & low-growing: has performed well in rock gardens & along building foundations
<i>Eupatorium</i> : old name that is still commonly used; botanists have now moved some species into different genera: <i>Eupatorium fistulosum</i> (<i>Eupatoriadelphus fistulosus</i>) <i>Eupatorium coelestinum</i> (<i>Conoclinium coelestinum</i>)	Joe Pye Weed Mistflower	Full sun to light shade; reseed readily; Joe pye weed is a tall perennial & can tolerate periodically wet sites; mistflower is a much shorter plant - it is primarily for naturalistic use because it dies out in patches but reseeds in new locations
<i>Geranium maculatum</i>	Wild Geranium	Light shade to part shade

<p><i>Helianthus divaricatus</i> <i>H. strumosus</i></p> <p>Note: <i>H. angustifolius</i> (swamp sunflower) grows best in full sun but can tolerate light shade if it is not crowded; also tolerant of periodically wet sites; some reseeding; October bloom & even into early November in some years</p>	<p>Spreading Sunflower Roughleaf Sunflower</p>	<p>Full sun to part shade; tolerant of dry sites; best for naturalistic use due to spreading habit</p>
<p><i>Heuchera americana</i> <i>H. villosa</i> ('Autumn Bride' & 'Purpurea')</p>	<p>American Alumroot Hairy Alumroot</p>	<p>Light shade to part shade; some reseeding</p>
<p><i>Hexastylis</i> (the genus for the American evergreen species; formerly classified as <i>Asarum</i>) <i>H. arifolia</i></p> <p><i>H. shuttleworthii</i> ('Callaway' & 'Carolina Silver') <i>H. virginica</i></p>	<p>Arrowleaf Heartleaf</p> <p>Largeflower Heartleaf, Mottled Wild Ginger Virginia Heartleaf</p>	<p>Evergreen; light shade to part shade; tolerate drier sites but prefer moist sites; do not crowd these plants</p>
<p><i>Iris cristata</i></p> <p><i>I. virginica</i></p>	<p>Dwarf Crested Iris</p> <p>Southern Blue Flag Iris</p>	<p>Light shade to part shade in dry or moist sites</p> <p>Full sun to light shade in moist or wet sites</p>
<p><i>Jeffersonia diphylla</i></p>	<p>Twinleaf</p>	<p>Light shade to part shade in rich, moist soil; likes calcium - add lime or gypsum to the soil when planting; often goes dormant in summer</p>
<p><i>Lobelia cardinalis</i></p>	<p>Cardinal Flower</p>	<p>Full sun to light shade in moist or wet sites; short-lived perennial: allow reseeding; can be sensitive to rot when covered up by tree leaves in winter</p>
<p><i>Maianthemum racemosum</i> (<i>Smilacina racemosa</i>)</p> <p><i>M. stellatum</i> (<i>S. stellata</i>)</p>	<p>False Solomon's Seal, Eastern Solomon's Plume</p> <p>Star-flowered False Solomon's Seal, Starry Solomon's Plume</p>	<p>Light shade to part shade; some reseeding</p>
<p><i>Mertensia virginica</i></p>	<p>Virginia Bluebells</p>	<p>Light shade to part shade; spring ephemeral (summer dormant); reseeds readily in moist locations</p>
<p><i>Monarda didyma</i> & cultivars that are powdery mildew resistant ('Jacob Cline' & 'Gardenview Scarlet')</p>	<p>Bee Balm</p>	<p>Full sun to light shade</p>
<p><i>Pachysandra procumbens</i> (native to NC, KY, TN & other southeastern states)</p>	<p>Alleghany Pachysandra</p>	<p>Light shade to full shade; semi-evergreen to evergreen</p>

<i>Packera aurea</i> (<i>Senecio aureus</i>)	Golden Ragwort	Full sun to part shade; moist to periodically wet sites; reseeds readily; invasive in certain garden locations
<i>Phlox divaricata</i>	Wild Blue Phlox	Light shade to part shade; some reseeding
<i>P. paniculata</i> & powdery mildew resistant cultivars such as 'Bright Eyes', 'David', 'Katherine', 'Nicky', & 'Shortwood'	Garden Phlox	Full sun to light shade (less problems with true bugs feeding on foliage in light shade); reseeds readily
<i>P. stolonifera</i> ('Sherwood Purple' is the most vigorous cultivar)	Creeping Phlox	Light shade to part shade; does not like crowding by other plants; can be sensitive to rot when covered up by tree leaves in winter
<i>Podophyllum peltatum</i> (spring ephemeral - summer dormant)	Mayapple	Light shade to full shade; naturalistic use best
<i>Polemonium reptans</i> ('Blue Pearl')	Jacob's Ladder	Light shade to part shade; some reseeding
<i>Polygonatum biflorum</i> var. <i>commutatum</i>	Smooth Solomon's Seal	Light shade to part shade; tolerates dry sites
<i>Rudbeckia laciniata</i>	Cutleaf Coneflower	Full sun to light shade; likes consistent moisture; best for naturalistic use - floppy; some reseeding
<i>Sanguinaria canadensis</i> (spring ephemeral - summer dormant; 'Flore Pleno' or 'Multiplex' is a double-flowered form)	Bloodroot	Light shade to part shade; goes dormant faster in dry sites; reseeds readily
<i>Scutellaria serrata</i>	Showy Skullcap	Light shade to part shade; tolerates dry sites
<i>Sedum ternatum</i>	Wild Stonecrop	Light shade to part shade; tolerates dry sites; some reseeding
<i>Silphium asteriscus</i> (sometimes sold under old name - <i>S. dentatum</i>)	Southern Rosinweed	Full sun to light shade (<i>S. asteriscus</i> is the most shade tolerant); tolerate dry sites in shady areas; <i>S. perfoliatum</i> reseeds readily; light reseeding of <i>S. asteriscus</i>
<i>S. perfoliatum</i>	Cup Plant	
<i>Sisyrinchium angustifolium</i>	Blue-eyed Grass	Light shade to part shade; naturalistic use best – subtle beauty; some reseeding
<i>Solidago caesia</i>	Wreath Goldenrod	Light shade to part shade ('Golden Fleece' is also adapted to full sun); tolerate dry sites; some reseeding of <i>S. caesia</i> & <i>S. flexicaulis</i>
<i>S. flexicaulis</i> ('Variegata')	Zigzag Goldenrod	
<i>S. phacelata</i> 'Golden Fleece'	Golden Fleece	
	Goldenrod	
<i>Spigelia marilandica</i> (may occur in southwestern VA – native to KY, TN, NC & other southeastern states)	Indian Pink	Light shade to part shade; prefers moist, rich soil
<i>Stylophorum diphyllum</i>	Yellow Wood Poppy	Light shade to part shade; reseeds readily; can be somewhat invasive in moist sites; long bloom period

<p><i>Thalictrum dioicum</i></p> <p><i>T. pubescens</i></p> <p><i>T. thalictroides</i> (preferred by USDA; <i>Anemonella thalictroides</i> is used by the Missouri Botanical Garden – see note at end of document)</p>	<p>Early Meadow Rue</p> <p>Tall Meadow Rue</p> <p>Rue Anemone</p>	<p>Light shade to part shade; naturalistic use – subtle beauty</p> <p>Full sun to light shade; tolerant of periodically wet sites & even dry sites; some reseeding</p> <p>Light shade to part shade; spring ephemeral (summer dormant)</p>
<p><i>Tiarella cordifolia</i> - the spreading form is more vigorous than the clumping form (var. <i>collina</i>)</p>	<p>Foamflower</p>	<p>Light shade to part shade</p>
<p><i>Tradescantia virginiana</i> (hybrids & cultivars are commonly grown in gardens)</p> <p>Note: <i>T. hirsuticaulis</i> is native to TN, NC, & other southeastern states - low growing, goes dormant in the summer, then comes back up again in late summer/early fall</p>	<p>Spiderwort</p>	<p>Full sun (moist site) to part shade; reseeds readily so may prefer for naturalistic use; tolerates dry sites</p>
<p><i>Trillium grandiflorum</i></p> <p><i>T. luteum</i> (native to NC, KY, TN & other southeastern states; naturalized in VA)</p> <p>Red-flowered species: <i>T. erectum</i> <i>T. sessile</i></p>	<p>Great White Trillium</p> <p>Yellow Trillium</p> <p>Red Trillium</p> <p>Sessile Trillium, Toad Trillium</p>	<p>Light shade to part shade in rich, moist soil; only buy propagated plants; some reseeding - seedlings look very different than mature plants</p>
<p><i>Uvularia grandiflora</i></p> <p><i>U. perfoliata</i></p> <p><i>U. sessilifolia</i> ('Variegata')</p>	<p>Large-flowered Bellwort, Great Merrybells</p> <p>Perfoliate Bellwort</p> <p>Sessile-leaved Bellwort</p>	<p>Light shade to part shade; <i>U. grandiflora</i> likes calcium - add lime or gypsum to the soil at planting</p>
<p><i>Viola canadensis</i></p> <p><i>V. pubescens</i></p> <p><i>V. striata</i></p> <p>Note: <i>V. sororia</i> (common blue violet) is a species you probably won't plant – it will naturally seed in</p>	<p>Tall White Violet</p> <p>Yellow Violet</p> <p>Cream Violet</p>	<p>Light shade to part shade for most species (<i>V. striata</i> & <i>V. sororia</i> also like full sun in moist sites); reseed readily & many species spread by rhizomes or stolons: can be invasive in certain sites so naturalistic use best</p>
<p><i>Zizia aptera</i></p> <p><i>Z. aurea</i></p>	<p>Heart-leaved Golden Alexanders, Meadow Zizia</p> <p>Golden Alexanders, Golden Zizia</p>	<p>Full sun to part shade; some reseeding; species are similar - basal leaves are simple for <i>Z. aptera</i> & compound for <i>Z. aurea</i></p>

NATIVE FERNS

Scientific Name	Common Name	Comments
<i>Adiantum pedatum</i>	Maidenhair Fern	Light shade to part shade; likes calcium - add gypsum or lime to the soil when planting if the soil is acid (tolerates alkaline soil - pH above 7)
<i>Athyrium felix-femina</i> (our native is classified as subsp. <i>asplenioides</i> by the USDA but not IPNI – see note at end of document)	Common Lady Fern, Asplenium Ladyfern	Light shade to full shade; tolerates alkaline soil
<i>Cystopteris protrusa</i>	Woodland Fragile Fern, Lowland Bladder Fern	Light shade to part shade; naturalistic use; not fragile as the name implies but do not crowd
<i>Dennstaedtia punctilobula</i>	Hay-scented Fern	Full sun (moist site) to part shade; tolerates relatively dry sites; naturalistic use in larger spaces because of its spreading habit
<i>Deparia acrostichoides</i> (<i>Athyrium thelypteroides</i>)	Silvery Glade Fern	Light shade to part shade; foliage turns black if soil dries out in summer so best in moist sites
<i>Diplazium pycnocarpon</i> (<i>Athyrium pycnocarpon</i>)	Glade Fern	Light shade to part shade; likes limestone soils (high in calcium) but also does well in acid soils (pH below 7)
<i>Dryopteris</i> × <i>australis</i> (natural hybrid of <i>D. celsa</i> × <i>D. ludoviciana</i>) – found in the wild in VA	Wood Fern	<p><i>Dryopteris</i> species prefer light shade to part shade but some species can even tolerate full shade.</p> <p>For <i>D. × australis</i> only: evergreen; moist to wet sites</p> <p>Mostly evergreen; performs well in consistently moist sites (also tolerates wet sites)</p> <p>Semi-evergreen; moist or wet sites</p> <p>Semi-evergreen to evergreen; moist or wet sites</p> <p>Moist sites best if want large plants – architectural fern</p> <p>Semi-evergreen to evergreen; consistently moist sites best</p> <p>Evergreen; tolerates alkaline soil; moist sites best but tolerates dry sites better than many ferns</p>
<i>D. carthusiana</i>	Spinulose Wood Fern	
<i>D. celsa</i> (natural hybrid of <i>D. goldiana</i> × <i>D. ludoviciana</i> - found in the wild in VA)	Log Fern	
<i>D. cristata</i>	Crested Wood Fern	
<i>D. goldiana</i>	Goldie's Wood Fern	
<i>D. ludoviciana</i> (native to NC & other southeastern states – only its hybrid <i>D. × australis</i> is native to VA)	Southern Wood Fern	
<i>D. marginalis</i>	Marginal Wood Fern	

<i>Matteuccia struthiopteris</i> Note: Keep away from natural populations in northern VA - critically imperiled in VA	Ostrich Fern	Light shade to part shade; moist or wet sites; tolerates alkaline soil; for larger spaces because of its spreading habit
<i>Onoclea sensibilis</i>	Sensitive Fern	Light shade to part shade; moist or wet sites; tolerates alkaline soil; best for naturalistic use – moths love to eat foliage
<i>Osmunda cinnamomea</i> <i>O. claytoniana</i> <i>O. regalis</i> (var. <i>spectabilis</i> is the variety that is native to VA – not sold under this name; another variety is native to Europe & Asia)	Cinnamon Fern Interrupted Fern Royal Fern	Light shade to part shade; moist or wet sites Light shade to part shade; moist sites; tolerates alkaline soil Light shade to part shade; moist or wet sites Note: these species are large, architectural ferns
<i>Phegopteris hexagonoptera</i> (<i>Thelypteris hexagonoptera</i>)	Broad Beech Fern	Light shade to full shade
<i>Polystichum acrostichoides</i>	Christmas Fern	Evergreen; light shade to full shade; tolerates dry sites
<i>Thelypteris noveboracensis</i>	New York Fern	Light shade to part shade; for larger spaces because of its spreading habit
<i>Woodwardia areolata</i>	Netted Chain Fern	Light shade to part shade; moist or wet sites; best for naturalistic use

An unusual fern: *Cheilanthes lanosa* (hairy lip fern) – an evergreen fern that loves rock walls & rock gardens in full sun to light shade.


A note about scientific names:

Current names are from the **International Plant Names Index** (IPNI; www.ipni.org/index.html) and/or the **USDA PLANTS Database** (<http://plants.usda.gov/>; this website also has many photographs of native plants). If a second scientific name is given, it is usually an old name that is still seen in some references or used by some nurseries (*Aster* and *Eupatorium* are notable exceptions). The **Missouri Botanical Garden** is also an excellent reference for plant names, gardening information, and photographs: the **Kemper Center for Home Gardening Plantfinder** features plants in their Kemper Center display gardens and is one of my favorite websites about ornamental plants (www.mobot.org/gardeninghelp/plantfinder/alpha.asp). Another resource is their plant name database for plants throughout the world at **w³TROPICOS** (<http://mobot.mobot.org/W3T/Search/vast.html>).

© 2007

Developed by Brenda Skarphol, Curatorial Horticulturist at Green Spring Gardens (with the assistance of Aleta Gadino, Virginia Native Plant Garden Intern). Updated 4-07.



 If ADA accommodations are needed, please call (703) 324-8563. TTY (703) 803-3354