

GREEN SPRING GARDENS 4603 GREEN SPRING RD • ALEXANDRIA • VA 22312 *PHONE:* 703-642-5173 • *TTY*: 703-803-3354 WWW.FAIRFAXCOUNTY.GOV/PARKS/GREENSPRING

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. 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 'Autumn Bride'. 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 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. Most of these plants are native to Virginia. It is noted if they are not native to Virginia: these plants are found in other southeastern states.

Help conserve native plant populations by buying only propagated plants: never buy plants collected from the wild. Two public gardens have websites listing native plant nurseries for the eastern U.S.: the North Carolina Botanical Garden (<u>http://ncbg.unc.edu/pages/48/</u>) and the Mt. Cuba Center

(<u>http://www.mtcubacenter.org/gardening-resources/nursery-sources/</u>). Native plants are sold in the Garden Gate Plant Shop at Green Spring during the growing season, the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society sells plants twice a year at Green Spring on Garden Day (in May and September), and other native plant vendors sell at Garden Day as well. Earth Sanga, Parkfairfax, and the U.S. National Arboretum also have native plant sales at garden events.

An information sheet is available for sunny areas as well: *Native Herbaceous Perennials for Sunny Gardens in the Washington, D.C. Area.* These plant information sheets are available on the Green Spring website under **Gardening** and in our Horticulture Center.

NATIVE HERBACEOUS PERENNIALS FOR SHADE			
Scientific Name	Common Name	Comments	
Antennaria plantaginifolia Note: A. virginica (shale barren pussytoes) is harder to grow in average conditions – it likes the top	Plantain Pussytoes	Full sun to light shade; prefers dry sites; some reseeding	
of a rock wall at Green Spring.			
Aquilegia canadensis	Wild Columbine	Full sun to light shade; individual plants short-lived so allow reseeding; tolerates dry sites	
Aralia racemosa	Spikenard	Light shade to part shade; reseeds readily.	
Note: <i>A. nudicaulis</i> (Wild Sarsaparilla) is not as showy.			
<i>Arisaema triphyllum -</i> connoisseur plant	Jack-In-The-Pulpit	Light shade to part shade in moist sites; can go dormant in the summer; do not crowd or will be short-lived; light reseeding. Naturalistic use.	
Aruncus dioicus	Goatsbeard	Light shade to part shade in moist sites; best for naturalistic use in our climate. Do not crowd.	
Asarum canadense (deciduous)	Wild Ginger	Light shade to full shade; likes moist sites.	
Evergreen species of <i>Asarum</i> or <i>Hexastylis</i> (botanists do not agree on names). The evergreen species are harder to grow well: <i>Asarum arifolium</i> or <i>Hexastylis</i> <i>arifolia</i>	Arrowleaf Wild Ginger, Little Brown Jug	The evergreen wild gingers (<i>Hexastylis</i> or <i>Asarum</i>) are more tolerant of drier conditions but are harder to grow – connoisseur plants. <i>Hexastylis virginica</i> or <i>Asarum virginicum</i> (Virginia Heartleaf) has been less persistent at Green Spring.	
Asarum shuttleworthii or Hexastylis shuttleworthii (Flora of Virginia lists as <i>H. lewisii</i>) – 'Callaway' is a more southern variety or ecotype.	Large-Flower Heartleaf, Mottled Wild Ginger		
Asclepias exaltata	Poke Milkweed	Light shade to part shade. Mostly a mountain plant but some plants survive & perform well in our region.	
Aster - old name that is still commonly used – see under Eurybia & Symphyotrichum	Aster		
Caltha palustris	Marsh Marigold	Light shade to part shade in constantly moist or wet sites; spring ephemeral (summer dormant)	
Cardamine concatenata (Dentaria laciniata)	Cutleaf Toothwort	Light shade to part shade; best for naturalistic use – spring ephemeral (summer dormant); some reseeding	
Note: <i>C. diphylla</i> 'American Sweetheart' is slower to establish			
Caulophyllum thalictroides	Blue Cohosh	Light shade to part shade	
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<i>Chelone obliqua</i> Note: <i>C. glabra</i> (White Turtlehead) has died out in shade	Pink Turtlehead	Full sun to light shade in moist or wet sites; some reseeding (slowly increases in size - spreading habit)
<i>Chrysogonum virginianum</i> (cultivars include 'Allen Bush' & 'Pierre')	Green and Gold	Light shade to part shade (can take full sun in moist sites when taller plants shade it somewhat); needs good drainage or rots out in patches
Note: var. <i>australe</i> is more vigorous but blooms less – this variety is native to GA & other southeastern states. The more ornamental native forms should be grown instead.		
<i>Cimicifuga racemosa</i> (some botanists prefer <i>Actaea</i> <i>racemosa</i>)	Bugbane, Black Cohosh, Fairy Candles	Light shade to part shade; likes calcium - add gypsum or lime when planting; some reseeding
Note : <i>C. rubifolia</i> (Appalachian Bugbane) is attractive but seldom available commercially		
Claytonia virginica	Spring Beauty	Light shade to part shade; spring ephemeral (summer dormant)
Collinsonia canadensis	Northern Horse Balm	Light shade to part shade; best for naturalistic use (small flowers but nice large leaves); light reseeding
Conoclinium coelestinum (Eupatorium coelestinum)	Mistflower	Full sun to light shade; dies out in patches but reseeds in new locations
Coreopsis major	Woodland Coreopsis	Full sun to light shade; tolerates dry sites but performs better with moisture
Delphinium exaltatum	Tall Delphinium	Light shade best; likes calcium - add limestone or gypsum to soil when planting. <i>D. exaltatum</i> is loved by deer.
D. tricorne	Dwarf Delphinium	<i>D. tricorne</i> is best for naturalistic use – spring ephemeral (summer dormant).
Dicentra eximia	Wild Bleeding Heart	Light shade to part shade. Tolerates dry sites, has a long bloom period, & reseeds
Note: <i>D. cucullaria</i> (Dutchman's Breeches) is a spring ephemeral & more of a connoisseur plant		readily.
<i>Enemion biternatum</i> or <i>Isopyrum biternatum</i> (botanists do not agree on the name)	False Rue Anemone	Light shade to part shade; spring ephemeral (summer dormant) & low- growing: has performed well in rock gardens & along building foundations
See true Rue Anemone below (<i>T. thalictroides</i> & once <i>Anemonella thalictroides</i>)		gardens & along building loundations
<i>Eupatorium</i> (old name that is still commonly used & only valid for some species; see under Conoclinium & <i>Eutrochium</i>		
Eurybia divaricata (Aster divaricatus)	White Wood Aster	Light shade to part shade; tolerate dry sites. <i>E. divaricata</i> is best used in naturalistic
E. macrophylla (Aster macrophyllus)	Large-Leaved Aster	plantings, larger areas, & dry areas – reseeds readily.

Eutrochium fistulosum	Hollow-Stem Joe Pye	Full sun to light shade in moist sites
(Eupatorium fistulosum)	Weed	
Geranium maculatum	Wild Geranium	Light shade to part shade
('Espresso' has performed well but		
not for naturalistic use)		
Helianthus divaricatus	Spreading Sunflower	Full sun to part shade; tolerant of dry sites;
H. strumosus	Roughleaf Sunflower	best for naturalistic use due to spreading habit
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		
Heuchera americana & cultivars	American Alumroot	Light shade to part shade; some reseeding
<i>H. villosa</i> ('Autumn Bride', 'Brownies', & 'Purpurea'. This species is a parent of some of the longest lived hybrids & cultivars as well. Other parents of the hybrids are not native to Virginia.)	Hairy Alumroot	
Hydrastis canadensis	Goldenseal	Light shade to part shade
Hydrophyllum virginianum	Virginia Waterleaf	Light shade to part shade. Naturalistic use.
Hylotelephium telephioides (Sedum telephioides)	Alleghany Sedum	Full sun to part shade (in nature in open or shaded rock outcrops); needs excellent drainage & tolerates dry sites - performs well in rock walls
Iris cristata	Dwarf Crested Iris	Light shade to part shade - moist sites best but sometimes does well in dry sites
I. virginica	Southern Blue Flag Iris	Full sun to light shade in moist or wet sites
<i>Jeffersonia diphylla</i> – connoisseur plant		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. Naturalistic use.
Lobelia cardinalis Note: <i>L. siphilitica</i> (Great Blue Lobelia) is more particular about where it will grow well – tends to particular about	Cardinal Flower	Full sun to light shade best; moist or wet sites; can be a short-lived perennial but reseeds readily in sites with good cultural conditions - no mulch or light mulch allows better reseeding. Basal foliage can rot when covered up by tree leaves in winter –
persist here & there.		remove leaf litter.
Maianthemum racemosum (Smilacina racemosa)	False Solomon's Seal, Eastern Solomon's Plume	Light shade to part shade; some reseeding
M. stellatum (Smilacina stellata)	Star-Flowered False Solomon's Seal, Starry Solomon's Plume	
Mertensia virginica	Virginia Bluebells	Light shade to part shade; spring ephemeral (summer dormant); reseeds readily in moist locations

Monarda didyma & cultivars that	Bee Balm	Full sun to light shade
are powdery mildew resistant		
('Jacob Cline' &		
'Gardenview Scarlet')		
Pachysandra procumbens	Alleghany Pachysandra	Light shade to full shade; semi-evergreen to
(native to NC, KY, TN & other		evergreen; needs moist soil. Slow grower.
southeastern states)		
Packera aurea	Golden Ragwort	Full sun to part shade; moist to periodically
(Senecio aureus)		wet sites; reseeds readily; invasive in
		certain garden locations
Penstemon smallii – native to NC &	Small's Penstemon	Full sun in moist sites to part shade. Can
other states in the southeastern		tolerant more shade than other native
U.S.		species.
Phlox divaricata & cultivars	Wild Blue Phlox	Light shade to part shade;
		some reseeding
P. paniculata & powdery mildew	Garden Phlox	Full sun to light shade (less problems with
resistant cultivars	Garden Fillox	true bugs feeding on foliage in light shade
		in this region – serious problem in full sun at
		Green Spring); reseeds readily & seedlings
		often different than the parent if a cultivar
		(often more like the rose pink species type)
		(often more like the rose pink species type)
P. stolonifera	Creeping Phlox	Light shade to part shade; does not like
('Sherwood Purple' is the most	oreeping r mox	crowding by other plants; can be sensitive
vigorous cultivar)		to rot when covered up by tree leaves in
		winter
Podophyllum peltatum	Mayapple	Light shade to full shade; naturalistic use
		best – spring ephemeral (summer dormant)
Polemonium reptans	Jacob's Ladder	Light shade to part shade;
('Blue Pearl' & other cultivars)		some reseeding
Polygonatum biflorum	Solomon's Seal	Light shade to part shade
Rudbeckia laciniata	Cutleaf Coneflower	Full sun to light shade; likes consistent
		moisture; best for naturalistic use - floppy;
		some reseeding
Sanguinaria canadensis	Bloodroot	Light shade to part shade; spring
'Flore Pleno' or 'Multiplex' –		ephemeral – summer dormant
double-flowered form)		(goes dormant faster in dry sites); the
		species type reseeds readily
Scutellaria serrate	Showy Skullcap	Light shade to part shade; tolerates dry
		sites
Sedum ternatum	Wild Stonecrop	Light shade to part shade; tolerates dry
		sites; some reseeding. Naturalistic use.
Silphium asteriscus	Southern Rosinweed	Full sun to light shade; tolerate dry sites in
(S. dentatum)		shady areas. S. asteriscus is the most
		shade tolerant & reseeds lightly.
S. perfoliatum	Cup Plant	S. perfoliatum reseeds readily.
Sisyrinchium angustifolium	Blue-Eyed Grass	Light shade to part shade; naturalistic use
0 // /		best – subtle beauty; some reseeding
Solidago caesia	Wreath Goldenrod	Light shade to part shade ('Golden Fleece'
O flands and to the terror to the		is also adapted to full sun); tolerate dry
S. flexicaulis ('Variegata')	Zigzag Goldenrod	sites; some reseeding for <i>S. caesia</i> &
Combooolate (Colder Elecce)	Colden Flagge Oststand	S. flexicaulis.
S. sphacelata 'Golden Fleece'	Golden Fleece Goldenrod	

Spigelia marilandica (native to Ky., Tenn., N.C., & other southeastern states)	Indian Pink	Light shade to part shade; prefers moist soil
Stylophorum diphyllum	Yellow Wood Poppy	Light shade to part shade; reseeds readily; can reseed excessively in moist sites; long bloom period
Symphyotrichum cordifolium (A. cordifolius)	Heart-Leaved Aster	Light shade to part shade; tolerates dry sites; best used in naturalistic plantings, larger areas, & dry areas – reseeds readily
Thalictrum dioicum	Early Meadow Rue	Light shade to part shade; naturalistic use – subtle beauty
T. pubescens	Tall Meadow Rue	Full sun to light shade; tolerant of periodically wet sites & even dry sites; some reseeding
T. thalictroides (Anemonella thalictroides)	Rue Anemone	Light shade to part shade; spring ephemeral (summer dormant). Connoisseur plant – top of rock walls & at the front of paths.
<i>Tiarella cordifolia</i> (the spreading form is much more vigorous & easier to garden with than the clumping form var. <i>collina</i>)	Foamflower	Light shade to part shade in consistently moist sites. 'Slickrock' has been the most tolerant of drier sites.
<i>Tradescantia virginiana</i> (hybrids & cultivars are commonly grown in gardens)	Spiderwort	Full sun (moist site) to part shade; reseeds readily so some may prefer for naturalistic use; tolerates dry sites
Trillium grandiflorum	Great White Trillium	Light shade to part shade (best growth in moist soil); some reseeding - seedlings
<i>T. luteum</i> (native to NC, KY, TN & other southeastern states; naturalized in VA)	Yellow Trillium	look very different than mature plants; only buy propagated plants
Red or Purple Flowered Species: <i>T. cuneatum</i>	Purple Trillium	
(native to NC, TN, & KY) <i>T. erectum</i>	Red Trillium	
T. sessile	Sessile Trillium, Toad Trillium	
Uvularia grandiflora	Large-Flowered Bellwort, Great Merrybells	Light shade to part shade; <i>U. grandiflora</i> likes calcium - add lime or gypsum to the
U. perfoliata	Perfoliate Bellwort, Merrybells	soil at planting
<i>U. sessilifolia</i> ('Variegata')	Sessile-Leaved Bellwort, Merrybells	

Viola canadensis	Tall White Violet	Light shade to part shade for most species. Naturalistic use best - reseed readily & many species spread by rhizomes or
V. pubescens	Yellow Violet	stolons. Host plants for fritillary butterfly species.
Note: <i>V. palmata</i> (Early Blue Violet, Wood Violet) is gorgeous but less persistant than some species.		
<i>V. striata</i> (Striped Cream Violet) & <i>V. sororia</i> (Common Blue Violet) also like full sun in moist sites – <i>V. sororia</i> will naturally seed in. Both are vigorous spreaders.		
Zizia aptera	Heart-Leaved Golden Alexanders, Meadow Zizia	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> (the later is in several gardens at
Z. aurea	Golden Alexanders, Golden Zizia	Green Spring)

NATIVE FERNS

Scientific Name	Common Name	Comments
Adiantum pedatum	Maidenhair Fern	Light shade to part shade. Grows best when add lime or gypsum to the soil when planting to provide calcium (tolerates alkaline soil - pH above 7).
Athyrium felix-femina var. asplenioides (ecotype native to Virginia) (A. asplenioides in the Flora of Virginia- some botanists recognize this name according to Tropicos but not listed in the Encyclopedia of Life).	Lady Fern	Light shade to full shade; tolerates alkaline soil (do not need to add lime when planting)
Cystopteris protrusa	Woodland Fragile Fern, Southern Fragile Fern	Light shade to part shade; naturalistic use; not as fragile as the name implies but do not crowd. Grows best when add lime or gypsum to the soil when planting to provide calcium.
Dennstaedtia punctilobula	Hay-Scented Fern	Full sun (moist site) to part shade; tolerates relatively dry sites; naturalistic use in larger spaces - spreading habit
Deparia acrostichoides (Athyrium thelypteroides)	Silvery Glade Fern, Silver False Spleenwort	Light shade to part shade; foliage turns black if soil dries out in summer so best in moist sites. Grows best when add lime or gypsum to the soil when planting to provide calcium.
Diplazium pycnocarpon (Athyrium pycnocarpon & Homalosorus pycnocarpos are names accepted by other botanists)	Glade Fern	Light shade to part shade; in Virginia found in rich soils in the mountains & the Piedmont, & in Coastal Plain calcareous ravines (high in calcium). Also does well in acid soils (pH below 7). Best to add lime when planting.

Dryopteris australis (D. x australis; natural hybrid of D. celsa & D. ludoviciana) – found in the wild in Virginia according to the USDA Plants Database but not in the Flora of Virginia)	Wood Fern	<i>Dryopteris</i> species prefer light shade to part shade but some species can even tolerate full shade. <i>D. australis</i> is evergreen & likes moist to wet sites.
D. carthusiana	Spinulose Wood Fern	Deciduous to mostly evergreen; performs well in consistently moist sites (also tolerates wet sites)
D. celsa (natural hybrid of D. goldiana & D. ludoviciana)	Log Fern	Semi-evergreen; moist or wet sites
D. goldiana	Goldie's Wood Fern	Moist sites best if want large plants. In Virginia usually on sites underlain by calcareous (calcium rich) or mafic rocks (rich in magnesium & iron): should like lime being added at planting.
<i>D. ludoviciana</i> (native to NC & other southeastern states)	Southern Wood Fern	Semi-evergreen to evergreen; consistently moist sites best
D. marginalis	Marginal Wood Fern	Evergreen; tolerates alkaline soil; moist sites best but tolerates dry sites better than many ferns
Matteuccia struthiopteris Note: Keep away from natural populations in northern Virginia close to the Potomac River - rare in Virginia	Ostrich Fern	Light shade to part shade; moist or wet sites; tolerates alkaline soil; for naturalistic design in larger spaces - spreading habit & doesn't look as good by late summer as some other species (at the southern end of its range)
Onoclea sensibilis Note: somewhat like Woodwardia areolata (netted chain fern) but have found that species to be harder to grow in gardens.	Sensitive Fern	Light shade to part shade; moist or wet sites; tolerates alkaline soil; best for naturalistic use – moths love to eat foliage
Osmunda cinnamomea or Osmundastrum cinnamomeum (2 nd name in the Flora of Virginia)	Cinnamon Fern	Light shade to part shade; moist or wet sites. Ancient plant in the geologic record (<u>http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn2526</u> <u>9-lava-fossilised-this-jurassic-fern-down-to- its-cells.html</u>) Light shade to part shade; moist sites;
O. claytoniana	Interrupted Fern	tolerates alkaline soil (mostly restricted to calcium- rich forests in the Coastal Plain so rare there – more common & wider range of soil conditions in the mountains & Piedmont). Should respond to lime being added to soil when planting in our area.
O. regalis	Royal Fern	Light shade to part shade; moist or wet sites
(All listed species are large ferns.)	Broad Beech Fern	
Phegopteris hexagonoptera Polystichum acrostichoides	Christmas Fern	Light shade to full shade Evergreen; light shade to full shade; tolerates dry sites

Thelypteris noveboracensis (Parathelypteris in the Flora of Virginia but not in references listed	New York Fern	Light shade to part shade; for larger spaces because of its spreading habit
below)		

Specialized Habitats – Ferns for Rock Gardens:

A. Sun-loving ferns in Green Spring's Rock Garden (grow in some shade as well):

Evergreen fern: *Asplenium platyneuron* (Ebony Spleenwort; often found away from rock in the wild, such as at the base of large trees) – harder to grow than *Cheilanthes*. Doing well in rock garden at Green Spring.

More semi-evergreen to evergreen here: *Cheilanthes lanosa* (Hairy Lip Fern; tends to die off over time as well. Rocky areas: doing well in rock garden at Green Spring.

B. Deciduous, sun-loving fern in Virginia Native Plant Garden in upper & lower walls: Woodsia obtusa (Bluntlobe Cliff Fern, Blunt-Lobe Woodsia; longer lived than the above but not as showy – likes to grow in rocky areas)

Scientific Names Of Plants - Current Names Are From:

- Encyclopedia of Life (<u>http://eol.org/</u>) institutional partners include Harvard University, the Missouri Botanical Garden, the Smithsonian Institution, and The Field Museum.
- Tropicos from the Missouri Botanical Garden (http://tropicos.org/)

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. However, sometimes the above databases do not agree on names.

Other References:

Flora of Virginia. Alan Weakley, J. Christopher Ludwig, and John Townsend. 2012. BRIT Press. Botanical Research Institute of Texas.

The **Kemper Center for Home Gardening Plantfinder** at the Missouri Botanical Garden is an excellent reference for plant names, gardening information, and photographs (<u>http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/plantfinder/plantfindersearch.aspx</u>). It features ornamental plants in their Kemper Center display gardens.

The Lady Bird Wildflower Center at the University of Texas in Austin has developed the **Native Plant Information Network** for native plants (<u>www.wildflower.org/explore/</u>).

USDA PLANTS Database (<u>http://plants.usda.gov/</u>) - this database focuses on plants native to the U.S. and to U.S. Territories and Protectorates, as well as naturalized non-natives and invasives.

Developed by Brenda Skarphol, Curatorial Horticulturist at Green Spring Gardens. Revised 7/7/14





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