



## GREEN SPRING GARDENS

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### Native Shrubs for the Washington, D.C. Area

Native shrubs are treasured additions to gardens due to their beauty throughout the seasons and year-round structure. They provide invaluable food and cover to birds, butterflies, bees, and other wildlife. Most of these plants are native to Virginia: these plants existed in Virginia before Jamestown, Virginia was founded in 1607. A few listed species are not native to Virginia but are native to other states in the southeastern U.S.

Deciduous shrubs are some of the most useful and exciting plants in the landscape. Because their leaves die and fall off in the autumn, they have changing interest throughout the year - they are valued for their flowers, fruits, foliage, and twigs, and for their varied shapes and textures. Embellish your landscape with these beautiful yet functional plants!

Evergreen shrubs are valued for their relatively constant foliage year-round. Many evergreen shrubs have other attractive features, such as beautiful flowers and fruit. Combine evergreen shrubs with deciduous shrubs and other plants in your landscape to maximize landscape interest.

The following are useful definitions:

- Cultivar (cv.) - a cultivated variety designated by single quotes, such as 'Brilliantissima'. 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.
- Full Sun – 6 hours or more of sun daily.
- Naturalistic use – native plants that, when properly sited, perform well with minimal care; best used in an informal design that suggests a natural landscape, or for the restoration of native plant communities.
- 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 medium-sized and small shrubs that perform well in the Washington, D.C. area. Deciduous shrubs are listed first. Most of these shrubs prefer a moist, well-drained site. Light requirements and other cultural requirements or tolerances are noted in the comments column. Recommended cultivars are noted, including Gold Medal Award winners [Gold Medal Plant Awards are given annually by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society to underused woody plants that perform especially well in gardens from New York City to Washington, D.C.].

#### NATIVE MEDIUM-SIZED DECIDUOUS SHRUBS (5-12 FEET TALL)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Comments
<i>Aesculus parviflora</i> (native to Ala., Ga., & S.C.) [Gold Medal Award]	Bottlebrush Buckeye	Light shade to part shade. Suckers & tall so not for small spaces.

<p><i>Aronia arbutifolia</i> &amp; 'Brilliantissima' [Gold Medal Award]</p> <p><i>Aronia melanocarpa</i> – a small to medium-sized shrub, depending on the selection. Iroquois Beauty ('Morton') has performed well. New cultivars being tested at Green Spring: Lo Scape Hedger ('UCOBNNAM166') &amp; Lo Scape Mound ('UCONNAM165')</p> <p><b>Note:</b> <i>A. prunifolia</i> (<i>A. floribunda</i>; purple chokeberry) is a natural hybrid of the above species. It is harder to purchase (supposedly taller plants but some plants at Green Spring have been short).</p>	<p>Red Chokeberry</p> <p>Black Chokeberry</p>	<p>Full sun to light shade; consistently moist to wet sites best. Slowly suckers.</p>
<p><i>Callicarpa americana</i></p>	<p>American Beautyberry</p>	<p>Full sun to light shade; tolerates dry sites. Grown for light purple fruit in the fall.</p>
<p><i>Calycanthus floridus</i> ('Michael Lindsey' won Gold Medal Award but have not seen for sale. Other fragrant cultivars include 'Edith Wilder' &amp; 'Big George'.)</p>	<p>Eastern Sweetshrub, Carolina Allspice</p>	<p>Light shade to part shade</p>
<p><i>Clethra alnifolia</i> – species is white flowered.</p> <p>Also pink flowered cultivars &amp; the darkest pink is 'Ruby Spice' [Gold Medal Award]; lighter pinks are 'Fern Valley Pink' &amp; 'Rosea'.</p> <p><b>Shorter cultivars:</b> 'Hummingbird' [Gold Medal Award; the toughest short cultivar], Sugartina ('Crystalina'), &amp; Vanilla Spice ('Caleb').</p> <p>The species itself &amp; most cultivars are medium-sized.</p>	<p>Summersweet</p>	<p>Full sun to part shade; moist to wet sites best. Slowly suckers.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> 'Sixteen Candles' performs well in some locations &amp; not in others (seems to like consistently moist sites).</p> <p>Vanilla Spice ('Caleb') leafs out later than the others so be patient &amp; don't cut it back.</p>

<p><i>Cornus amomum</i> - young stems are not colorful in the winter as is the species below</p> <p><i>C. sericea</i> (‘Hedgerows Gold’ is variegated) - usually colorful stems in the winter for the species &amp; cultivars (keep renewal pruning)</p>	<p>Silky Dogwood</p> <p>Redosier Dogwood</p>	<p>Full sun to light shade; tolerate wet soils; dogwood sawfly is a problem in some sites.</p> <p>For <i>C. sericea</i> to produce colorful winter stems - renewal prune yearly for best winter stem color (no more than 1/3 of the stems removed in a given year – prune out oldest stems). ‘Cardinal’ does not have good winter color in our area compared to up north where it was selected.</p>
<p><i>Cyrilla racemiflora</i> (for the native plant collector; some small forms also available but not very attractive in our area)</p>	<p>Swamp Cyrilla, Swamp Titi</p>	<p>Full sun to light shade; prefers moist to wet soils. Interesting species with twisting branches.</p>
<p><i>Fothergilla</i> ‘Mount Airy’ (cross of <i>F. gardenii</i> x <i>F. major</i>; both species are native to NC &amp; further south) [Gold Medal Award]</p>	<p>Hybrid Fothergilla</p>	<p>Full sun to part shade in moist sites.</p> <p>Note: The parents of this cross have been harder to grow at Green Spring: <i>Fothergilla gardenii</i> is smaller &amp; needs consistently moist sites. <i>F. gardenii</i> ‘Suzanne’ is compact, has excellent flowers, &amp; good fall color.</p>
<p><i>Hydrangea quercifolia</i> (native to Tenn. &amp; several southeastern states)</p> <p><b>Taller cultivars:</b> *Snowflake (‘Brido’) - double-flowered white (no value to pollinators) *Snow Queen (‘Flemygea’) [Gold Medal Award] – single-flowered white</p> <p>Many other cultivars are available.</p> <p><b>Shorter cultivars:</b> ‘Ruby Slippers’ - flowers open white &amp; transition from pink to rose ‘Sikes Dwarf’ - white flowers (short for several years &amp; eventually medium-sized)</p>	<p>Oakleaf Hydrangea</p>	<p>Light shade to full shade. Blooms on old wood so best to prune after flowering if needed (seldom needs pruning).</p> <p>Little Honey (‘Brihon’) is a yellow-leaf selection of ‘Pee Wee’. ‘Pee Wee’ has not performed well in drier sites in the past – both ‘Pee Wee’ &amp; Little Honey at Green Spring are grown in locations with higher than average irrigation levels.</p>

<p><i>Ilex verticillata</i> &amp; cultivars:  ‘Scarlett O’Hara’  [Gold Medal Award].  Male pollinator is ‘Rhett Butler’.</p> <p>[‘Winter Red’ &amp; ‘Winter Gold’ - both won a Gold Medal Award]  Male pollinator for ‘Winter Red’ &amp; ‘Winter Gold’ is ‘Southern Gentleman’ (pollinator for southern type, fast-growing cultivars).</p> <p>‘Red Sprite’ (‘Nana’) is a short cultivar that likes moist to wet sites [Gold Medal Award].</p>	<p>Winterberry Holly</p>	<p>Full sun to part shade; best in moist to wet sites (fruits better with moisture &amp; sun).</p> <p>The wild type of <i>Ilex verticillata</i>, can eventually grow to be a large shrub &amp; fruit is more palatable to birds (so disappears faster).</p> <p>Newer cultivars under evaluation include Berry Poppins (‘FarrowBPop’; reported to be 3 - 4 ft tall), &amp; Mr. Poppins (‘FarrowMrP’) is the pollinator.</p>
<p><i>Lindera benzoin</i></p>	<p>Spicebush</p>	<p>Light shade to part shade - moist sites best (good fall color in shade)</p>
<p><i>Myrica pensylvanica</i> or <i>Morella pensylvanica</i></p> <p><b>Note:</b> <i>M. cerifera</i> (Wax Myrtle) is evergreen but often is harder to establish in our area.</p>	<p>Northern Bayberry</p>	<p>Full sun; salt tolerant; tolerates dry sites but dieback after some very dry years; can be hard to establish plants in some sites. Have not had luck with dwarf cultivars.</p>
<p><i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i> &amp; cultivars:  <b>Gold leaves:</b> ‘Dart’s Gold’ &amp; ‘Nugget’</p> <p><b>Purple leaves:</b>  Diabolo (‘Monlo’)  [Gold Medal Award; Diabolo is a synonym] &amp;  Summer Wine (‘Seward’; slightly shorter cultivar)</p> <p><b>Purple leaves with a bit of gold in the middle:</b>  ‘Center Glow’</p> <p><b>Coppery leaves in spring &amp; reddish in summer:</b>  Coppertina (‘Mindia’)</p> <p>New supposedly shorter cultivars available but have not grown (have smaller leaves) – ‘Little Devil’ &amp; ‘Tiny Wine’.</p>	<p>Ninebark</p>	<p>Full sun to light shade; species type is best for naturalistic use; tolerant of dry sites (especially in light shade) but looks best in moist sites.</p> <p>Popular now that have cultivars with colorful leaves.</p>

<p><i>Rhododendron</i> - deciduous azalea species native to Virginia: <i>R. arborescens</i> (Species is white to rose colored; growth can be very slow. A pink-flowered form has been more vigorous in gardens. 'Pink and Sweet' is a <i>R. arborescens</i> x <i>R. arborescens</i> hybrid)</p> <p><i>R. calendulaceum</i> &amp; cultivars (native to southern portion of Virginia in mountains so give best growing conditions)</p> <p><i>R. periclymenoides</i> (one of the best performers in average sites in our area)</p> <p><i>R. prinophyllum</i> ('Marie Hoffman' has bloomed well but looks like it might be a hybrid)</p> <p><i>R. viscosum</i> &amp; cultivars ('Lemon Drop' is slightly fragrant – some forms are very fragrant. 'Betty Cummins' looks promising.)</p>	<p>Sweet Azalea</p> <p>Flame Azalea</p> <p>Pinxterbloom Azalea</p> <p>Roseshell Azalea</p> <p>Swamp Azalea</p>	<p>Light shade to part shade. Most prefer moist sites – of this group <i>R. periclymenoides</i> is the most tolerant of dry sites. <i>R. arborescens</i> &amp; <i>R. viscosum</i> like more moisture (moist to at least periodically wet sites).</p> <p><b>Note:</b> 'White Lightning' is a showy natural hybrid of <i>R. arborescens</i> with <i>R. calendulaceum</i> or <i>R. cumberlandense</i>.</p>
<p><i>Rhododendron atlanticum</i> &amp; hybrids (often shorter plants than the above species) – One shorter cultivar is 'Marydel' (cross of <i>R. atlanticum</i> &amp; <i>R. periclymenoides</i>). 'Choptank Yellow' has the same parentage but a different flower color. A similar cross at Green Spring originally found in the wild is medium-sized.</p>	<p>Coast Azalea &amp; Hybrids</p>	<p>Light shade to part shade; Some tolerance of dry sites.</p> <p>These hybrids often occur naturally in the wild. The Choptank hybrids were originally selected from natural populations in the Maryland &amp; Delaware border area. Other hybrid cultivars include 'Choptank Rose' &amp; 'Rosy Cheeks'.</p>
<p><i>Rhododendron</i> - deciduous azalea species native to other southeastern states &amp; some of their cultivars: <i>R. alabamense</i> (native to Tenn. &amp; other southeastern states)</p> <p><i>R. austrinum</i> &amp; cultivars (native from Ga. to Miss.) – frequently used to create hybrid cultivars</p> <p><i>R. flammeum</i> &amp; cultivars (native to GA &amp; SC) - bloomed well but very short so far (eventually supposed to be medium-sized)</p>	<p>Alabama Azalea</p> <p>Florida Azalea</p> <p>Onocee Azalea</p>	<p>Of this group <i>R. alabamense</i> has been the most tolerant of dry sites but prefers moist sites.</p> <p>Some <i>R. austrinum</i> plants have had winter kill on some branches following dry summers &amp; cold winters.</p> <p>Green Spring is evaluating hybrids of many species as well. 'Coleman's Early Yellow' is possibly a hybrid of <i>R. austrinum</i> &amp; <i>R. alabamense</i>. 'My Mary' is a hybrid of 3 native species.</p>

<p><i>Rhus aromatica</i></p> <p><i>R. copallinum</i></p> <p><i>R. glabra</i></p> <p><i>R. typhina</i> &amp; cultivars: 'Dissecta' ('Laciniata') &amp; Tiger Eyes ['Bailtiger' – Gold Medal Award; golden foliage &amp; more compact than the species]</p>	<p>Fragrant Sumac</p> <p>Shining Sumac</p> <p>Smooth Sumac</p> <p>Staghorn Sumac</p>	<p>Full sun; tolerate dry sites; suckers</p> <p>The species type of <i>R. typhina</i>, <i>R. copallinum</i>, &amp; <i>R. glabra</i> can become large shrubs.</p> <p>Deer damage the trunks of large plants in the rut (breeding season) – may need protect the bark in areas with deer with plastic mesh protectors or cages.</p>
<p><i>Viburnum dentatum</i> - native forms tend to have red-yellow fall color, while Red Feather ('JN Select') has red-purple fall color.</p> <p><i>V. nudum</i> (var. <i>nudum</i>) - Brandywine ('Bulk') &amp; 'Winterthur' [Gold Medal Award]</p> <p><b>A native species best for naturalistic use:</b> <i>V. acerifolium</i></p>	<p>Arrowwood Viburnum</p> <p>Smooth Withe-rod Viburnum, Possumhaw Viburnum</p> <p>Mapleleaf Viburnum</p>	<p>Full sun to light shade; tolerate dry sites. Blue Muffin ('Christom'; reported to be smaller than the species type but just grows more slowly when young; yellow fall color).</p> <p>Full sun to part shade. Likes moist to wet sites.</p> <p>Light shade to part shade; not as tough as some species over time (has declined over time so more for native plant collectors – deer &amp; drought problems at Green Spring).</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Viburnums are generally self-incompatible &amp; need two plants of the same species with different genetic backgrounds to produce fruit.</p>

**Medium-sized Native Shrubs Best for Naturalistic Use or Special Habitat Uses:**

*Alnus serrulata* (Smooth Alder) - wetlands & wet areas. Other native species also available from native plant nurseries.

*Amelanchier spicata* or *A. stolonifera* (Running Serviceberry) - wildlife gardening

*Cephalanthus occidentalis* (Buttonbush) – consistently moist or wet soils; full sun best. Testing shorter cultivar 'Sugar Shack'. Excellent plant for adult butterflies.

*Corylus americana* & *C. cornuta* (Hazelnut) - wildlife gardening but loved by deer to the point that they can kill it.

*Euonymus americana* (American Euonymus, Bursting Heart) & *E. atropurpurea* (Eastern Wahoo; can eventually become a large shrub)

*Rosa carolina*, *R. palustris*, & *R. virginiana* (Native Roses) – often sucker extensively & many thorns

*Sambucus nigra* subsp. *canadensis* (*S. canadensis*) (American Elderberry) - wildlife gardening

**NATIVE SMALL DECIDUOUS SHRUBS (2-5 FEET TALL)**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Comments
<i>Hydrangea arborescens</i> (lacecap flowers) & cultivars. 'Annabelle' [Gold Medal Award; double white flowers].  'Invincibelle Ruby' is a double-flowered cultivars that looks promising.	Smooth Hydrangea	Species type is loved by deer. Blooms on new wood so can prune in the spring.  <b>Note:</b> newer introductions with lacecap type flowers are not in the Green Spring collection, such as 'White Dome'.
<i>Itea virginica</i> Taller cultivars include 'Henry's Garnet' [Gold Medal Award], 'Longspire', 'Sarah Eve', & 'Saturnalia'.  Little Henry ('Sprich') is a short cultivar & vigor is too low in some locations – seems to like moist, loamy soils best.	Virginia Sweetspire	Full sun to part shade; tolerant of wet or dry sites; suckers slowly.  'Henry's Garnet' has the excellent fall color. Little Henry has nice fall color in good sites.
<i>Rhus aromatica</i> 'Gro-Low' (the species itself is usually medium-sized)	Gro-Low Sumac	Full sun to light shade; tolerates dry sites. Grown mostly for beautiful red fall color & ground cover habit in dry sites.
<i>Spiraea alba</i> (var. <i>latifolia</i> )  Note: Native species are grown primarily by native plant lovers & to attract butterflies – generally not as showy as Asian species & cultivars.	White Meadowsweet	Full sun in consistently moist sites best.  Other species found in Virginia ( <i>S. tomentosa</i> & <i>S. virginiana</i> ) like consistently moist to wet sites. <i>S. virginiana</i> (Virginia Spiraea) is endangered in the wild & difficult to purchase.
<i>Symphoricarpos orbiculatus</i>	Coralberry	Full sun & tolerant of dry sites; spreads by suckers. Good wildlife plant.

**Small Native Shrubs Primarily for Naturalistic Use, Special Habitat Uses, or Fruit Production:**

*Diervilla lonicera* & *Diervilla sessilifolia* (Diervilla, Bush Honeysuckle). *Diervilla sessilifolia* is native to NC & further south – testing Kodiak Black ('SMNDRSF'). Have not tested variegated *D. sessilifolia* Cool Splash ('LPDC Podaras') but may be useful to gardeners who like white variegated foliage in their borders.

*Vaccinium stamineum* (Deerberry; fruit not eaten by humans) &

*V. corymbosum* (Highbush Blueberry; fruit delicious to humans – the blueberry we most commonly eat; likes acid, moist to periodically wet sites, & prefers sandier or rockier soils; fruits better in full sun)

*Zenobia pulverulenta* (Dusty Zenobia) - blue-leaved forms are available but were harder to grow at Green Spring.

**NATIVE MEDIUM-SIZED EVERGREEN SHRUBS (5-12 FEET TALL)**

<i>Illicium floridanum</i> (native to Fla., Ga., & other southeastern states) 'Halley's Comet' [Gold Medal Award]	Florida Anise-Tree	Light shade to part shade
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<i>Juniperus</i> 'Grey Owl' (at least some parentage is the native <i>J. virginiana</i> )	Grey Owl Juniper	Full sun; tolerates dry sites; a female form with blue cones
<i>Kalmia latifolia</i> (many cultivars are available - 'Olympic Fire', 'Pristine', & 'Yankee Doodle' have been the best performers at Green Spring)	Mountain Laurel	Light shade to part shade; best in naturally moist sites with good drainage – doesn't like a lot of overhead irrigation (disease problems). The shorter cultivars didn't have enough vigor to perform well.
<i>Rhododendron maximum</i>	Rosebay Rhododendron	Light shade to part shade in moist sites with good drainage
<i>Thuja occidentalis</i> - dwarf & slow growing cultivars  Gold cultivars: 'Sunkist' & the taller Techny Gold ('Walter Brown') – both 10 – 15 ft. tall  Green Cultivars: 'Hetz Midget' is a small cultivar (3-4 ft), as is 'Umbraculifera'. 'Filiformis' grows slowly to 6 ft.  'Emerald' ('Smaragd') grows slowly to 15 ft tall - fairly narrow	Dwarf & Slow Growing Eastern Arborvitae Cultivars	Full sun to light shade; tolerates dry sites

#### NATIVE SMALL EVERGREEN SHRUBS (2-5 FEET TALL)

<i>Ilex glabra</i> cultivars: Some of the best include Nordic ('Chamzin') & 'Shamrock' (the most compact form)	Inkberry Holly	Full sun to light shade in moist or periodically wet sites. The species type is taller & for naturalistic use.
<i>I. opaca</i> 'Maryland Dwarf' & 'Clarendon Spreading' ('Clarendon')	Dwarf American Holly Cultivars	Full sun to part shade; tolerates dry sites
<i>Leucothoe fontanesiana</i> (best to grow the species type - cultivars that were tested at Green Spring were more disease prone)  <b>Note:</b> <i>L. axillaris</i> (Coast Leucothoe) likes more consistent moisture – has done well not far from Turkeycock Run at Green Spring	Drooping Leucothoe	Light shade to part shade in moist sites
<i>Pinus strobus</i> dwarf & slow growing cultivars such as 'Blue Jay', 'Horsford', & 'Merrimack' - mostly for plant collectors who can provide the right growing conditions.	Dwarf & Slow Growing Eastern White Pine Cultivars	Full sun. Were good performers on well-drained, north-facing slope at Green Spring & the Rock Garden, but in level sites these dwarf forms have died when fairly young (fungal pathogens). Snow damage in years with heavy snow sometimes is too extensive so they were removed.



### **Scientific Names Of Plants - Current Names Are From:**

- **Encyclopedia of Life** (<http://eol.org/>) – 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, the above databases do not always 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 (<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/plantfinder/plantfindersearch.aspx>).

It features plants in their Kemper Center display gardens and is an excellent website about ornamental plants.

### ***Landscaping With Native Plants. Maryland Native Plant Society.***

(<http://www.mdflora.org/resources/Publications/GardenersGuidelines/Landscaping-Natives.pdf>).

This booklet is also available in print form.

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

***Native Plants for Northern Virginia*** (<http://www.plantnovanatives.org/>). This booklet is also available in print form. It is a publication of the Plant NoVA Natives initiative, which includes the Virginia Native Plant Society.

**USDA PLANTS Database** (<http://plants.usda.gov/java/>) - 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. It is also used to determine distribution within Virginia by county.

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