

# Going Native



*One benefit of native plants: wildlife.*

The regular happy-go-lucky plant that will make your backyard bloom with health and vigor is most likely one of about 4,000 native plant species found throughout Virginia.

Native plants in any particular area are those which arrived, established and survived without any human

assistance. Native species will tolerate the environment of a region: the soil, temperature and rainfall, and they have the added bonus of attracting local birds and butterflies.

If you are like most people, you want to maximize the enjoyment of your backyard – you want something attractive, low maintenance and a little bit different than the neighbor's yard.

Choosing the right native plant can be a challenge, especially because you will want to match the plant to the spot in your landscape that will be most accommodating. A local park could be the source of inspiration to match native plants to your backyard habitat. And with native plants you will likely:

- Reduce erosion
- Reduce runoff
- Reduce the spread of non-native species
- Maintain the integrity of local habitats
- Maintain or improve soil fertility
- Increase birds and other wildlife.

As more and more native plants are becoming available from growers, planting native is easier than ever. Obtain your plants from reputable sources since sometimes native plants are stolen from the wild (including parkland), and in that case no one wins – these plants don't survive the shock of transplanting.

With a little work, you can transform your backyard into a haven for wildlife and insects and provide a beautiful, hardy, low maintenance landscape.



## Care, Educate, Inspire

Stewardship is about working together to care for the environmental and cultural resources of Fairfax County. People become stewards for different reasons. They may want to help ensure clean water and air. They may wish to share something with their children. They may be inspired by spiritual beliefs. Whatever prompts our commitment, it is easy to take an active role in stewardship. It can be a small and simple thing, or it can be much bigger. Either way, it all adds up to a Fairfax County that looks to its past with pride and to its future with confidence.

You can learn more about Fairfax County Stewardship, the Board of Supervisors' 20-year environmental vision and the Fairfax County Park Authority at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/stewardship](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/stewardship) or call 703-324-8674



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# Fairfax County Stewardship



# Native Backyard Plants

## Eleven Backyard Habitats

### The Shady Characters

**Spicebush** is a pretty shrub with brilliant red berries in the fall. Scratch and sniff the bark to find out how it got its name.



William S. Justice@USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database



J.S. Peres@USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database

### The Good Neighbor

Good fences make good neighbors, and native evergreens like American holly and **Virginia pine** make a hardy living fence.

### The Tree Line

For the “no plant’s land” between where the lawn ends and the trees start, the **calico aster** and other native asters offer a long-flowering, 2-4 ft tall splash of white, pale pink or light blue in the dappled shade.



L. Bright

### The Square Sidewalk

**Butterfly weed**, an easy plant with a long bloom, readily adapts to dry summer soil and can be used to soften the edges of a square sidewalk or patio.



Tom Barnes, University of Kentucky



W.L. Wagner@USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database

### The “I’ve Always Wanted a Fruit Tree”

Two kids, a station wagon, white picket fence and a fruit tree... Try the native **paw paw**, a relatively compact tree with very

large leaves, for a source of native fruit for you and area wildlife.

### The Utility Boxes

All azaleas are derived from native stock, and can withstand the windy conditions next to air conditioners, but the **pinksterbloom azalea** is a plant that can also be found in local woodlands.



Tom Barnes, University of Kentucky



George F. Russell

### The Mud Pit

To avoid mucky, muddy shoes, plant a fern, like the 4-foot tall **cinnamon fern**, in areas you don’t want to walk anyway.

### Sunny Dispositions

**Elderberry’s** attractive flowers and fruit are a major draw for wildlife. White flowers in late spring give way to purplish-black berries in the fall that attract birds – and humans.



Patrick J. Alexander@USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database



Tom Barnes, University of Kentucky

### The Groundcover Color

Everyone wants a groundcover, and **foam flower’s** dense growth is a lot friendlier to the environment than an invasive species.



Tom Barnes, University of Kentucky

### The Deergarden

Vines often have an ugly name but the **trumpet creeper**, a native hummingbird feeder, is an attractive addition to a home landscape as well as tolerant of deer munching.

## If not you, who? Small things.

**Plant a native plant.** Reducing your home yardscape by just one invasive, non-native plant can have a tremendous positive effect on local forests and natural areas. Maybe the plants here weren’t the ones for you, but there are many others. For more plant suggestions, visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/stewardship](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/stewardship).

## If not you, who? Big things.

**Volunteer to remove invasive plants from your local natural area.** Many local jurisdictions and non-profits have volunteer events where you can learn to help rid a natural area of its invasive weeds. See our calendar at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/invasive-management-area>