



National Capital Presbytery Earth Care Network

BEST PRACTICES: NATIVE PLANTS & TREES

WHY WE SHOULD CARE FOR THE CREATION

Our Presbyterian faith encourages us to strive for eco-justice: defending and healing creation while working to assure justice for all of creation and the beings that live in it. This call is rooted in the human vocation of “tilling and keeping” the garden from Genesis 2:15, as well as Christ’s charge to work with and for the most vulnerable. Because of our love for Christ, who is firstborn of all creation (Colossians 1:15), churches are challenged to live in a manner consistent with God’s call to not only care for creation, but commune with it.

WHAT ARE NATIVE PLANTS?

Plants and trees that have grown naturally in a specific region and habitat in which they evolved are referred to as “native”. They have co-evolved along with local wildlife, pollinators, insects, birds, and mammals to create a self-sustaining and intricately balanced ecosystem.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

Native plants and trees play an important role within their natural ecosystem by providing food and habitat to wildlife native to the same region. Without native plants and trees, the food chain that supports survival of pollinating birds, butterflies, and bees is diminished, and as a result their populations decline. Baby songbirds eat only insects, not seeds. Adult butterflies sip nectar from a wide variety of flowers, but their caterpillars almost always require the native plants with which they evolved. Most local insects, particularly caterpillars, bees, and other pollinators, can eat only the native plants they co-evolved with.



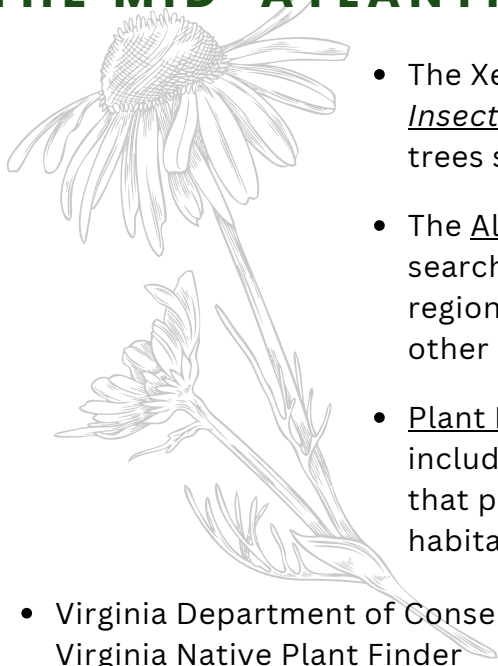
Over thousands of years, native plants and trees have adapted to their local environment and climate to survive naturally, which means they are often more disease resistant and require less maintenance, less water and fertilizer, and fewer pesticides than non-native plants and trees. They also attract beneficial insects native to each region, which helps balance the natural ecosystem in your garden.

Native plants and trees help the environment in many ways. They prevent water runoff, improve air quality, and decrease pollution by reducing the need for mowers and other equipment used for mowing lawns.

HOW TO GET STARTED

- Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake offers a four-step guide, *How Does Your Garden Grow? Picking Plants for Your Native Plant Garden*, to help get you started by providing information on selecting and caring for native plants and trees
- Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake also offers a guide and action kit specific to planting trees, tips for follow-up care, additional resources, and a list of native trees in the *Maryland Native Tree Guide & Planting Action Kit*

HOW TO SELECT PLANTS AND TREES NATIVE TO THE MID-ATLANTIC REGION



- The Xerces Society's *Native Plants for Pollinators & Beneficial Insects: Mid-Atlantic* provides a select list of native plants and trees specific to the Mid-Atlantic region and their characteristics
- The *Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay's Native Plant Center* is a searchable database of native plants and trees searchable by region, plant type, sun exposure, soil texture, soil moisture, and other characteristics, along with color photos
- *Plant NoVA Natives* offers an extensive array of resources including their *Native Plants for Northern Virginia* book and app that provides information on getting started, how to get plants, habitat gardening, and landscape solutions.
- Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation provides a searchable database, *Virginia Native Plant Finder*
- The Plant Virginia Natives Initiative promotes the increased use and availability of native plants by offering *Piedmont Native Plants: A Guide for Landscapers and Gardens*



- The University of Maryland Extension provides a list, photos, and growing conditions of native plants and trees in [Recommended Native Plants for Maryland](#)
- The Maryland Department of Natural Resources offers [Native Plants of Maryland](#) booklet identifying native plants and trees and their characteristics
- National Wildlife Foundation [Native Plants Finder](#)
- [Audubon.org](#) bird-friendly native plants

HOW TO IDENTIFY NON-NATIVE AND INVASIVE PLANTS

- [Fairfax County, VA, Non-Native Invasive ID and Control](#)
- [Plant Invaders of the Mid-Atlantic 2022 Field Guide PDF](#)

LANDSCAPING WITH NATIVE PLANTS

- Wild Ones Garden Design [Washington, DC - Native Garden Designs](#)
- Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council Conservation Landscaping Guidelines: [The Eight Essential Elements of Conservation Landscaping](#)
- DEP, Montgomery County Government, MD Stormwater Garden: [Conservation Landscape, RainScapes](#)
- Rockville, MD [RainScapes Rebate Program](#)
- Gaithersburg, MD [Rainscapes Reward Program](#)
- Chesapeake Bay Trust [Prince George's County Rain Check Rebate](#)
- Virginia Department of Forestry [Rain Gardens](#) and [Rain Gardens Technical Guide](#)
- Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake [Rain Garden Blessing & Maintenance Kit](#)



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