NC PIEDMONT LANDSCAPING
A Native Plant Guide Provided by the North Carolina Native Plant Society
NC Piedmont Landscaping
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The U.S. Department of Agriculture Plant Hardiness Zone Map is the standard by which gardeners and growers can determine which plants are likely to thrive at a location. Plant hardiness zones are based on a region’s average extreme weather temperatures over a 30-year time frame.
Why Native Plants?

The natural Piedmont landscape supports a diversity of beautiful and fascinating native plants. Native plants have adapted to the region’s varying conditions, ranging from broad rolling hills to steeper sunny, dry, south- and west-facing slopes and cooler north-facing slopes with their associated temperatures, rainfall, and soil characteristics.

Incorporating native plants into the home landscape is essential for maintaining the integrity of local native plant communities and the wildlife they support. Yards and gardens with native plants can help connect fragmented habitat by serving as biological corridors and creating more productive ecosystems.

Native wildlife relies on native plants for food and cover, providing shelter from the elements and predators. These plants also give wildlife protection while feeding, breeding, nesting, and traveling. Native plants support local food webs. Native shrubs and trees are especially important in supporting a high level of biodiversity.

Once established, native plants typically do not need irrigation or fertilizer if properly matched with site conditions. Watering as needed the first year promotes a healthy root system.

Using a variety of native plants instead of potentially invasive non-native plants will increase ecosystem function and stability in your landscape. Invasive non-native plants reduce the number of species that exist in a natural landscape, and disrupt local food webs.
Landscaping for the Piedmont

This guide is for anyone interested in adopting nature-friendly gardening in the Piedmont region of North Carolina. It features 34 plants that are native to the region, are visually attractive, and support wildlife. Each profile includes details on plant appeal, growing conditions, and where it can be found growing in the region.

The guide is offered by The North Carolina Native Plant Society to encourage homeowners to supplement their landscape with plants that are native to their region. Understanding a plant’s natural habitat will aid homeowners in choosing and locating the plant in the most favorable conditions for successful growth. We encourage communities and individuals to maximize the use of naturally occurring native plants (‘wild-type’ species). Be aware that cultivars and hybrids of native plants may vary significantly from the wild species (in leaf color, flower structure, and fruit size), which can affect their usefulness to native wildlife. Visit our website homepage ncnps.org and click on Nurseries for sources of native plants.

Some References to Help Plan Your Native Landscape:


# FEATURED PLANTS

* TYPE – D (Deciduous), E (Evergreen)
** SUN – Full (Full Sun), P.S. (Part Shade), S (Shade)

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<tr>
<th>SCIENTIFIC NAME</th>
<th>COMMON NAME</th>
<th>HEIGHT</th>
<th>WIDTH</th>
<th>TYPE*</th>
<th>SUN**</th>
<th>ZONE</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Carpinus caroliniana</em></td>
<td>American Hornbeam</td>
<td>20'–30'</td>
<td>20'–35'</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>P. S. / S</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Cercis canadensis</em></td>
<td>Eastern Redbud</td>
<td>20'–30'</td>
<td>25'–35'</td>
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<td>Full / P. S.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Chionanthus virginicus</em></td>
<td>American Fringetree</td>
<td>12'–30'</td>
<td>12'–20'</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Full / P. S.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Cornus florida</em></td>
<td>Flowering Dogwood</td>
<td>15'–30'</td>
<td>15'–35'</td>
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<td>Full / P. S.</td>
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<td><em>Ilex opaca</em></td>
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<td><em>Nyssa sylvatica</em></td>
<td>Blackgum</td>
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<td>20'–35'</td>
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<td>50'–80'</td>
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<td><em>Aronia arbutifolia</em></td>
<td>Red Chokeberry</td>
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<td>Carolina Phlox</td>
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<td>Rudbeckia fulgida</td>
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<td>1'–2'</td>
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<td>Solidago caesia</td>
<td>Blue Stem Goldenrod</td>
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<td>Symphyotrichum cordifolium</td>
<td>Heartleaf Aster</td>
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<td>1'–2'</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Full / P. S.</td>
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AMERICAN HORNBEAM
*Carpinus caroliniana*

A slow-growing, deciduous, small to medium-sized understory tree with an attractive globular form, found naturally in areas with moist soil and able to withstand periodic flooding. Alternate leaves have a double-toothed edge and pointed tips. Bark is smooth, gray to bluish-gray, and heavily fluted with long, sinewy ridges. In early spring, flowers appear in separate male and female catkins. Female catkins on the same plant produce clusters of ribbed nutlets enclosed by a distinctive 3-lobed leafy bract. The overlapping, clustered bracts are ornamental for a few weeks in late summer. Fall color ranges from yellow to orange-red to brown. Also known as Ironwood due to the density of the wood and Musclewood due to the sinewy longitudinal ridges along the trunk.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**
- Attracts birds, butterflies, & small mammals
- Shade-tolerant
- Flowers in March & April
- Fruits in September & October

**LIGHT EXPOSURE:** Part shade to full shade

**SOIL:** Moist to wet

**HEIGHT & WIDTH:** H: 20’–30’ W: 20’–35’

**FORM:** Multi or single trunked, round-topped crown

**ZONE:** 3–9
EASTERN REDBUD
*Cercis canadensis*

A fast-growing, deciduous, understory tree with the trunk often divided close to the ground, slightly zigzag stems, and smooth, alternate, broadly heart-shaped leaves. Magenta-pink pea-like blooms hang in small clusters along twigs, branches, and mature trunks in early spring before leaves emerge. Flowers are slightly fragrant and have both male and female parts. Seeds develop in a two-to-three-inch flattened pod that often persists throughout the winter. Bark is brownish black and develops into rough scales with age. Leaves may appear off color with spots by late summer and fall color is usually yellow. Often found growing beneath taller trees, on the edges of forests, and along the borders of fields throughout North Carolina.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**
- Attracts birds, butterflies, & native bees
- Fast growing
- Blooms from March into May
- Fruits from June to November

**LIGHT EXPOSURE:** Full sun to part shade

**SOIL:** Occasionally dry to moist

**HEIGHT & WIDTH:** H: 20’–30’ W: 25’–35’

**FORM:** Small tree, rounded crown

**ZONE:** 4–9
AMERICAN FRINGETREE
Chionanthus virginicus

A small deciduous understory tree that may grow in shapes from shrubby to tree-like, often with a wide-spreading crown. Found in a variety of habitats including rich forests, dry woods, streamsides, and wetland margins. Leaves are opposite, simple, and oblong. One of the last trees to show new leaves in spring. Fragrant showy flowers appear in billowy clusters on branchlets and each blossom is white with four very thin, drooping petals. Plants are usually either male or female. If pollinated, female plants will set small, dark blue olive-like fleshy fruits that are eaten by birds. Leaves turn yellow in autumn. American Fringetree is at its best in moist, fertile soil with at least 3 to 4 hours of sun.

HIGHLIGHTS:
- Attracts birds, bees, butterflies, & small mammals
- Slow growing
- Flowers in April and May
- Fruits from July to September

LIGHT EXPOSURE: Full sun to part shade
SOIL: Occasionally dry to moist
HEIGHT & WIDTH: H: 12’–30’ W: 12’–20’
FORM: Multi or single trunked, open habit
ZONE: 3–9
FLOWERING DOGWOOD
Cornus florida

A small deciduous understory tree with spreading horizontal branches that give it a layered effect. New twigs curve downward and then upward. The inconspicuous flowers are greenish yellow and surrounded by four white showy petal-like bracts. Flowers have both male and female parts and open before the leaves emerge. Leaves are opposite with veins arching toward the tip and smooth to wavy edges. The glossy red mature fruits form clusters of three or more that ripen in the fall and are quickly consumed by birds. Fall leaf color is a deep red to reddish purple. As the tree ages, the bark becomes broken into small squarish and rectangular, gray-brown blocks. Found in oak-hickory and mixed pine-hardwood forests across the state.

HIGHLIGHTS:
- Attracts birds, bees, butterflies, & small mammals
- Blooms from late March into April
- Fruits in September and October

LIGHT EXPOSURE: Full sun to part shade
SOIL: Occasionally dry to moist
HEIGHT & WIDTH: H: 15’–30’ W: 15’–35’
FORM: Layered branches, flat-topped crown
ZONE: 5–9
AMERICAN HOLLY
Ilex opaca

A slow-growing pyramidal evergreen tree found throughout the state in hardwood forests and bottomlands. It has alternate, evergreen leaves that are thick and dull dark green, with a few sharp-spined teeth. Usually branched to the ground when grown in the open and can be used for screening in a large landscape. Plants are either male or female and produce greenish-white flowers in the spring. For fruit set, the male must be the same holly species as the female and bloom at the same time. If pollinated, the female trees are heavily adorned with red fruit in late fall and persist until eaten by birds. The bark is smooth and light gray. Protect from desiccating winter sun and winds and plant in well-drained soils.

HIGHLIGHTS:
- Attracts birds, bees, butterflies, & small mammals
- Provides winter cover for birds
- Blooms from April to June
- Fruits from September to October

LIGHT EXPOSURE: Full sun to full shade
SOIL: Occasionally dry to moist
HEIGHT & WIDTH: H: 40′–60′  W: 10′–20'
FORM: Pyramidal habit, dense leafy canopy
ZONE: 5–9
BLACKGUM
*Nyssa sylvatica*

A slow- to moderate-growing deciduous tree found across the state in a variety of soil types and moisture conditions. Branches are often crooked and stand at right angles to the trunk giving a layered effect. The leaves are alternate, generally oblong to oval, and tapering to the tip. The small flowers are inconspicuous but bees are attracted to them. The trees are primarily either male or female with most plants having a few flowers of both sexes. Some plants bear many egg-shaped, ½-inch-long blue-black fruits, while others may only have a few. The bark is gray-brown and on the trunks of mature trees becomes quite blocky, resembling alligator hide. The glossy foliage turns from yellow to scarlet in autumn. A beautiful tree in autumn.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**
- Attracts birds, bees, butterflies, & small mammals
- Outstanding fall color
- Flowers from April to June
- Fruits from August to October

**LIGHT EXPOSURE:** Full sun to part shade

**SOIL:** Occasionally dry to moist

**HEIGHT & WIDTH:** H: 30’–100’  W: 20’–35’

**FORM:** Straight trunk with horizontal branches

**ZONE:** 3–9
SOURWOOD
Oxydendrum arboreum

A deciduous, medium-sized understory tree found across the state in rocky woods, and in other upland forests and semi-moist acidic soils. Open-grown Sourwood is pyramidal and sometimes branched to the ground, but if grown in the shade it usually becomes more crooked and irregular in form. The glossy, finely toothed, entire leaves have a slightly sour taste, hence the common name. Small, white, bell-like flowers hang in rows from one side of long, drooping clusters that develop after the leaves are fully grown; they remain showy for 3 to 4 weeks. The fragrant blossoms attract honeybees. Bark is soft gray with deep furrow-like ridges. Leaves turn deep red in early fall, and the dangling fruit clusters may remain visible into the winter.

HIGHLIGHTS:  
Attracts birds, bees, butterflies, & small mammals  
Excellent fall color  
Blooms in June and July  
Fruits in September and October

LIGHT EXPOSURE: Full sun to full shade  
SOIL: Occasionally dry to moist  
HEIGHT & WIDTH: H: 35’–50’  W: 10’–15’  
FORM: Pyramidal habit, rounded top and drooping branches  
ZONE: 5–9
WHITE OAK
Quercus alba

A majestic deciduous, slow-growing, and long-lived oak with a rounded spreading crown, found in bottomlands and upland forests. The alternate leaves have 7–11 uneven, rounded lobes; the space between the lobes varies in depth. Male flowers on catkins and inconspicuous yellowish-green female flowers on twigs appear on the same plant in early spring. Leaves emerge grayish or pinkish when unfolding but mature to dark green. The fruits are oval acorns with raised bumpy scaled caps. Host to many caterpillar species providing an essential food source for birds and their young. Fall color ranges from browns to dark red. The light-gray bark has scaly plates. Adapts to a wide variety of soil conditions with good drought tolerance for the large landscape.

HIGHLIGHTS: Attracts birds, bees, butterflies & small mammals
            Flowers March to June
            Acorns mature September to November

LIGHT EXPOSURE: Full sun to part shade
SOIL: Occasionally dry to moist
HEIGHT & WIDTH: H: 50‘–135’ W: 50‘–80’
FORM: Upright rounded habit, wide-spreading branches
ZONE: 3–8
**RED CHOKEBERRY**
*Aronia arbutifolia*

A deciduous, multi-stemmed, colonizing shrub, which sends up vigorous sprouts that grow to 6’ tall and branch near the top, resulting in a vase shape when young and an arching clump when older. Found across the state in swamps, bogs, and also drier thickets but adapts to many soil types. Bees readily visit the attractive clusters of white to light pink, 5-petaled flowers that appear in spring. Leaves are alternate, rough-textured, and dark green in summer. Fall leaf color is dark red or reddish-orange. Often abundant along the stems and branch tips, the stunning scarlet fruits are sour and mealy when ripe and passed over until birds are hungry in the late winter. Best fruit production occurs in full sun.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**
- Attracts birds, bees, butterflies, & small mammals
- Excellent fall color
- Blooms in March to May
- Fruits in September into November

**LIGHT EXPOSURE:** Full sun to full shade

**SOIL:** Dry to wet

**HEIGHT & WIDTH:** H 6’–10’ W 3’–5

**FORM:** Upright, spreading-suckering

**ZONE:** 4–9
A deciduous shrub or sometimes small tree found in freshwater wetlands, on banks, and in shallow water with full sunlight to light shade. Glossy dark-green leaves emerge later in spring and grow opposite or in whorls of three along thick twigs and cluster toward the outer canopy. This open look is ideal for underplanting. Its common name refers to the 1-inch round cluster of sweetly fragrant, nectar-rich flowers growing from the branch tips in summer. The flower clusters mature into reddish-brown hard spherical fruits consisting of multiple tiny two-seeded nutlets. Fall leaf color is typically yellow, especially vivid in full sun. It adapts to a wide range of soils except in dry areas.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**
- Attracts waterfowl & other birds, bees, butterflies, & small mammals
- Flowers on new growth, prune as needed
- Blooms in June to August
- Fruits in August & September

**LIGHT EXPOSURE:** Full sun to part shade

**SOIL:** Occasionally dry to moist

**HEIGHT & WIDTH:** H: 5’–8’ W: 3’–6’

**FORM:** Loose shrub, multi-stemmed

**ZONE:** 5–9
LARGE WITCH-ALDER
Fothergilla major

A medium-sized deciduous shrub found in woodlands, bluffs, and riverbanks of the upper Piedmont. Unlike its “relative” *F. gardenii*, which is a wetland species found on the Coastal Plain, *F. major* is an upland species. Ribbed oval leaves are alternate, simple, leathery, and blue-green to dark green. Fragrant bottlebrush-like white flowers are displayed at the tips of twigs as the leaves emerge. Fruit is a beaked, egg-shaped, two-seeded capsule that matures in fall, eventually bursting and explosively broadcasting the seed. The showy fall foliage is yellow-orange to red-purple. Does best in moist, acidic, organically rich soils that have good drainage. Forms a clumping, spreading colony. ‘Mount Airy’ is a popular cultivar, a cross between *F. major* and *F. gardenii*.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**
- Attracts birds, bees, & butterflies
- Outstanding fall color
- Blooms in April & May
- Fruits from July to October

**LIGHT EXPOSURE:** Full sun to part shade

**SOIL:** Occasionally dry to moist

**HEIGHT & WIDTH:** H: 6’–12’ W: 6’–10’

**FORM:** Rounded, multi-stemmed, dense

**ZONE:** 4–8
COMMON WINTERBERRY

Ilex verticillata

A wetland species found in floodplain pools, swamps, and wet thickets with moderately rich to slightly acidic soils. Grows into a dense, oval, suckering shrub. Leaves are toothed and dark to light green; fall color is a dull yellow. Plants are either male or female and produce small greenish-white flowers in the spring. For fruit set, the male must be the same holly species as the female and bloom at the same time. One male winterberry is sufficient for pollinating 6–10 female plants. If pollinated, the female plants are adorned with red fruit in late fall that persists until eaten by birds. Best fruit production occurs in full sun. Prune to shape in early spring before new growth and flowers appear.

HIGHLIGHTS: Attracts birds, bees, butterflies, & small mammals
Beautiful red berries in winter
Blooms in April & May
Fruits from September to November

LIGHT EXPOSURE: Full sun to full shade
SOIL: Occasionally moist to wet
HEIGHT & WIDTH: H: 3’–15’ W: 3’–12’
FORM: Oval to rounded, dense, fine twiggy branches
ZONE: 3–9
VIRGINIA SWEETSPIRE
Itea virginica

A mound-shaped, deciduous shrub with slender, arching branches. Found mostly along forested stream banks and wet thickets but tolerating a wide range of soil conditions. Pendant clusters of sweetly scented white flowers open from base to tip so that the plant appears to bloom for a long time. Fruit of woody capsules are showy in the fall. Oval, dark-green leaves with finely toothed edges turn varying shades of red, orange, and gold in autumn and persist well into the winter. It can form dense colonies by root suckering. For best flowering and fall color, it should be planted where it gets several hours of sun each day. Prune soon after flowering, as this plant blooms on the previous season’s wood.

HIGHLIGHTS:
- Attracts birds, bees, butterflies, & small mammals
- Long period of striking fall color
- Blooms in May & June
- Fruits August to October

LIGHT EXPOSURE: Part shade
SOIL: Moist to occasionally wet
HEIGHT & WIDTH: H: 4’–8’ W: 3’–6’
FORM: Rounded, multi-stemmed, arching branches
ZONE: 5–9
NORTHERN SPICEBUSH
*Lindera benzoin*

A deciduous understory shrub that can be found in rich forests, dry forests, and swamps. The alternate, oblong leaves have a smooth edge and produce a spicy odor when crushed. Fall leaf color is an attractive yellow. The bark is brown to gray-brown and broken twigs give off a lemon fragrance. In early spring, small, greenish-yellow flowers are found in clusters along the branch before the foliage emerges. The shrub produces bright red, shiny, oval fleshy fruit that ripens in the fall. Plants are either male or female, and a male plant must be available to pollinate female plants for fruit set. The high-fat fruits are eaten by songbirds. The caterpillar of the Spicebush Swallowtail butterfly feeds on the leaves.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**
- Attracts birds, bees, butterflies, & small mammals
- Excellent yellow fall color
- Blooms in March & April
- Fruits in August & September

**LIGHT EXPOSURE:** Part shade

**SOIL:** Occasionally dry to moist

**HEIGHT & WIDTH:** H: 8’–15’ W: 6’–15’

**FORM:** Rounded, open habit in shade

**ZONE:** 5–9
PINXTERBLOOM AZALEA
*Rhododendron periclymenoides*

A picturesque, horizontal-branching, slow-growing, deciduous shrub found in hardwood or mixed forests, usually on slopes and often along forested streambanks. Vase-shaped, pink or white sometimes fragrant flowers with protruding stamens occur in large clusters, appearing before the leaves mature. Like many azaleas, the leaves are thin, oblong, and medium-green, mostly clustered at the tips of twigs. The fruit is a dry seed pod about ¾ inch long. Foliage turns yellow in fall. Best grown in acidic, organically rich, and well-drained soils of medium moisture, in high open shade. It does not grow well with wet feet. At least half a day of sunshine seems to keep it from getting leggy.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**
- Attracts bees, butterflies, & hummingbirds
- Striking spring flowers
- Blooms from late March into May
- Fruits in September & October

**LIGHT EXPOSURE:** Part shade

**SOIL:** Occasionally dry to moist

**HEIGHT & WIDTH:** H: 4’–10’ W: 4’–5’

**FORM:** Much-branched, spreading

**ZONE:** 4–9
SMOOTH BLACK HAW VIBURNUM
_Viburnum prunifolium_

A large, upright, sometimes multi-stemmed, deciduous shrub or small tree with an irregular crown, commonly found in moist woods, thickets, and on streambanks. The attractive creamy-white spring flowers open in large clusters as copper-colored leaves are emerging, and produce blue-black, berry-like fleshy fruits that often persist into winter and are eaten by wildlife. It forms a stubby trunk with rigid horizontal branches and spur-like twigs. The opposite, finely toothed medium-green leaves are twice as long as broad and turn red to bronze in fall. Viburnums set fruit better with more than one shrub for pollination. Easily grown in average, dry to medium, well-drained soil in full sun to part shade. Tolerates drought. Flower buds form in summer for the following year.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**
- Attracts birds, bees, butterflies, & small mammals
- Blooms in March & April
- Fruits in September & October

**LIGHT EXPOSURE:** Full sun to part shade

**SOIL:** Dry to moist

**HEIGHT & WIDTH:** H: 12’–20’ W: 6’–15’

**FORM:** Single trunk or multi-stemmed, stiffly branched

**ZONE:** 3–9
Northern Maidenhair, fancifully named because of a resemblance to long, spread-out hair, is a beautiful, delicate fern, thriving in rich, moist forests with less acidic soils. The bright green, deciduous leaf, up to 2’ across, rises from a long, deep purple or black leaf stalk and forms two branches, each with leaflets fanning out into a nearly horizontal semicircle. The leaflets are divided into fan-shaped to oblong sub-leaflets with ragged edges. Spore-bearing parts are tucked under the sub-leaflet margins. Reddish fiddleheads (inedible) unfold in early spring. This fern spreads slowly by creeping, branching rhizomes, over time forming large colonies. Adiantum means “unwetted” because the foliage sheds rain; it’s a joy to behold a colony of Northern Maidenhair dotted with silvery raindrops.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**
- Attractive, delicate shape
- Easily divided with spade or sharp knife
- Used for shelter by birds & other small animals

**LIGHT EXPOSURE:** Part sun to shade

**SOIL:** Moist; alkaline to somewhat acidic

**HEIGHT & WIDTH:** H 1’–2’ W to 2’

**FORM:** Clumping, spreading over time

**ZONE:** 3–8
SOUTHERN LADY FERN
Athyrium asplenioides

A common clump-forming, deciduous fern found in moist hardwood forests and bottomlands. The elongate, triangular-shaped, medium green leaves grow to 3’ in height and width. Leaves are divided into leaflets up to 8” long, with the longest leaflets at or near the base of the leaf; the leaflets become gradually shorter toward the often-lax leaf tip. The leaflets are further divided into toothed segments, giving the fern a lacy look. The leaf’s midrib is brown to reddish, and the stem below the leaf has scattered brownish scales. Elongated, curved reproductive structures containing spores are located on the back of the frond. Easy to grow and very reliable, it makes a bold statement in woodland gardens.

HIGHLIGHTS:
Lacy, delicate shape
Somewhat drought tolerant
Used as shelter by birds & other small animals

LIGHT EXPOSURE: Part sun to shade
SOIL: Moist to average
HEIGHT & WIDTH: H 20”–36” W 2’–3’
FORM: Compact, clumping perennial
ZONE: 5–9
CINNAMON FERN
Osmundastrum cinnamomeum

Cinnamon Fern grows in many wetlands but is also found in damp forests and even wet roadside ditches. Striking throughout the growing season, this fern grows up to 5’ tall and forms a broad clump. The deciduous, bright-green sterile leaves have 20 or more deeply lobed leaflets, longest at or near the bottom of the leaf and gradually tapering to very short at the leaf’s tip. Woolly cinnamon hairs are found at the leaflet base, on the stem below the leaf, and the large, inedible fiddleheads. The separate, shorter, cinnamon-colored fertile fronds have leaflets with clustered grape-like structures that open to release spores. Fertile fronds wither by early summer, while the sterile fronds turn a striking yellow-bronze color in autumn.

HIGHLIGHTS:  Good fall color (yellow to bronze)
Tolerates seasonal drought
Long-lived, forms a colony
Woolly hairs used for nesting material

LIGHT EXPOSURE:  Sun to part shade
SOIL:  Wet to moist; acidic
HEIGHT & WIDTH:  H 2’–5’  W 3’–5
FORM:  Erect, clumping
ZONE:  4–9
CHRISTMAS FERN
Polystichum acrostichoides

This handsome, clumping, evergreen fern grows in a variety of habitats, from damp woods, moist slopes, and bottomlands to drier, rockier forests. Each narrow, elongated, dark-green leaf is divided into leathery leaflets, with bristly, toothed margins and an upward-pointing lobe at the base, reminiscent of the shape of a Christmas stocking. The fertile fronds are more upright than the arching sterile fronds, with brown spore-bearing parts densely packed on the upper leaflets of the fertile fronds. Fiddleheads (inedible) appear in early spring and are covered with stout, silvery scales, contrasting with the deep green of last year’s now-prone leaves. Removing spent fronds before new ones emerge may weaken the plant—leave them attached for mulch.

HIGHLIGHTS: Easily grown & transplanted
Provides winter color
Used as shelter by birds & other small animals
Plant on slopes to reduce erosion

LIGHT EXPOSURE: Part sun to shade
SOIL: Moist to dryish, well-drained; acidic to neutral
HEIGHT & WIDTH: H 1’–2.5’ W 1’–2’
FORM: Arching, vase-shaped whorl, clumping
ZONE: 3–9
SPLITBEARD BLUESTEM
Andropogon ternarius

A warm-season, clumping perennial grass found in pine-oak and pine-oak-hickory woodland edges, wooded openings, and fields. Thrives in poor soils that are coarse, rocky, or sandy. The flat leaves are long and very narrow and often densely hairy, with a waxy silver appearance. By late summer, stiff bluish-green stems rise from the clump to grow numerous pairs of elongate flower clusters. From late summer through fall, the fluffy seed heads display silvery-white tufts, while the stems turn copper, red, and bronze. This grass grows best in full sun but can tolerate some shade. The deep fibrous root system helps stabilize soil and withstand drought. Due to its relatively high seedling vigor, it may be best used in naturalized areas.

HIGHLIGHTS: Attracts birds, butterflies & small mammals
Graceful V-shaped seed heads in fall
Flowering & fruiting
September to October

LIGHT EXPOSURE: Full sun to part shade
SOIL: Dry to moist
HEIGHT & WIDTH: H 2’–5’  W 2’–3’
FORM: Clumping perennial
ZONE: : 6–10
Eastern Narrowleaf Sedge
*Carex amphibola*

A robust perennial sedge found in deciduous floodplain forests, slopes above streams or creeks, and moist upland deciduous woodlands. The shiny, narrow, semi-evergreen leaves are upright with triangular stems and grow in fountain-shaped, compact mounds. In late spring green scaly flower spikes top the gracefully shaggy foliage. The male pollen-bearing flower clusters are located above the female flower clusters on the same stem. This deer-resistant sedge thrives in shaded sites with moist soil and also provides winter interest and erosion control. Best used as a groundcover or edging plant for a shade garden. Serves as a larval host for some types of Skipper caterpillars and seeds are eaten by birds and turtles.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**
- Attracts birds, butterflies, & turtles
- Good native replacement for Liriope
- Flowering & fruiting late April to June

**LIGHT EXPOSURE:** Part shade to full shade

**SOIL:** Occasionally dry to moist

**HEIGHT & WIDTH:** H 1’–1.5’ W 1’–1.5’

**FORM:** Clumping, semi-evergreen

**ZONE:** 3–9
BLACK COHOSH
*Actaea racemosa*

An upright, deciduous perennial found in openings of a variety of rich hardwood forests. Numerous small, creamy white, fragrant flowers appear in long narrow erect clusters rising well above the foliage on wiry stems in spring to mid-summer. A close-up of the flower shows dozens of white spokes (male) around a central “peg” (female). Flowers open from the bottom upward extending the bloom for two weeks or more, and produce small, dry seed pods after blooms have faded. The large horizontal leaves are alternate and divided into coarsely toothed leaflets. Site where it will receive a bit of morning sun as flower stalks tend to bend toward bright light when plants are grown in full shade.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**
- Attracts birds, butterflies, bees & other pollinators
- Adds vertical interest
- Blooms from May to July
- Fruits shortly after blooming

**LIGHT EXPOSURE:** Part shade to full shade

**SOIL:** Occasionally dry to moist

**HEIGHT & WIDTH:** H: 4’–7’  W: 2’–4’

**FORM:** Erect, clumping

**ZONE:** : 3–8
A deciduous perennial found in rich hardwood to mixed floodplain forests, where it grows best in moist, loamy soils in full sun to part shade. It has an erect, vase-shaped growth habit that becomes more striking with age, and features clusters of soft, light-blue flowers in spring. Each of the flowers has a slender tube and five narrow and spreading lobes that form a star shape. Attractive, narrow, beanlike pods form after flowering. The alternate, narrow, oval to lance-shaped leaves turn golden-yellow in the fall. When a handful of plants grows together in a clump, it creates a pleasing light-blue display when in bloom. Cut back stems after flowering to promote bushy growth.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**
- Attracts birds, butterflies, bees & other pollinators
- Drought-tolerant once established
- Blooms mainly in April
- Fruits August & September

**LIGHT EXPOSURE:** Full sun to part shade

**SOIL:** Occasionally dry to moist

**HEIGHT & WIDTH:** H: 2’–3’ W: 2’–3’

**FORM:** Rounded, clumping

**ZONE:** 3–9
GREEN-AND-GOLD
Chrysogonum virginianum

A semi-evergreen, low-growing perennial found in moist to dry deciduous forests and wooded rocky slopes. The deep green leaves are opposite, bluntly toothed, and hairy, with clusters of star-shaped yellow flowers blooming atop the tight clump of foliage. Each flower has five rounded, slightly notched yellow petals and a center tuft of yellow disk flowers. After flowering, fruits form as dark brown to black, oval, flattened nutlets. It has one of the longest flowering periods among spring-blooming native plants. Blooms usually become sparse or stop in the heat of the summer, with a light rebloom occurring in fall. The plant can be highly variable, from upright to creeping. Best grown in well-drained soil; avoid over-watering.

HIGHLIGHTS:
Attracts birds, butterflies, bees & other pollinators
Long bloom period
Flowering late March to June
Fruits shortly after blooming

LIGHT EXPOSURE: Part shade to full shade
SOIL: Occasionally dry to moist
HEIGHT & WIDTH: H: 1’ W: 1’–1.5’
FORM: Low growing, clumping, or spreading
ZONE: 5–9
LOBED TICKSEED  
Coreopsis auriculata

A semi-evergreen, low-growing perennial found in wood edges, thickets, and forest openings, often on slopes or at bases of slopes. It typically grows in a dense, bushy, slowly spreading clump up to 2’ tall. The daisy-like flower heads are almost 2” across, bright yellow with a center of yellow disk flowers and 8 toothed petals. They are mostly solitary, on long leafless stalks. Fruits are single, dark-brown seeds. The hairy, opposite leaves are oval and dark green, and usually have a pair of small side lobes at the leaf base, hence the common name Lobed Tickseed or Mouse-eared Tickseed. Leaves persist through most of the winter. Plants form colonies via runners. Shear in mid-summer to promote a fall rebloom.

HIGHLIGHTS:  
- Attracts birds, butterflies, bees & other pollinators  
- Flowering April to June  
- Fruiting shortly after flowering  
- Resistant to deer browse

LIGHT EXPOSURE: Full sun to part shade
SOIL: Occasionally dry to moist
HEIGHT & WIDTH: H: 1’– 2’  W: 1’– 2’
FORM: Low growing, clumping, or spreading
ZONE: 4–9
HOLLOW JOE-PYE WEED
Eutrochium fistulosum

A tall deciduous perennial found in freshwater marshes, stream margins, bottomlands, and wet roadside ditches. The lance-shaped, toothed leaves are in whorls of 3–7 around the hollow stem, which has a pale waxy coating. The stems are mostly unbranched, green below with purple markings, turning more uniformly purple above. The flower cluster is a large, fuzzy dome made up of pale pink to purplish, honey-scented disk flowers that appear in late summer. Seeds are small, with tufts of bristly hair for wind distribution. Cut back in early June to produce a bushier, somewhat delayed but more floriferous plant. These plants need plenty of space and water and should not be allowed to dry out. Divide clump in spring or fall.

HIGHLIGHTS:  Attracts birds, butterflies, bees & other pollinators
Long bloom season
Flowering late July to October
Fruiting shortly after flowering

LIGHT EXPOSURE:  Full sun
SOIL:  Moist to wet
HEIGHT & WIDTH:  H: 4’–8’  W: 2’–4’
FORM:  Tall, erect, clump-forming
ZONE:  4–8
Found in moist soils of bottomlands, meadows, and roadside ditches but sometimes occurs in upland sites such as glades, powerline clearings, and wooded borders with less acidic soils. A deciduous perennial with oval, opposite leaves that have toothed margins and a sandpapery texture. The yellow daisy-like flower heads have domed, deep-golden central disks and yellow-orange petals with slightly notched tips. Blooms are produced in great quantities on thin stems above the foliage, with fruits maturing into the fall. Plants spread to form a tight clump and flower through late summer. Remove spent flowers to extend bloom season. Plant stems may be cut back by 1/3 to 1/2 in late May to reduce overall plant height if desired.

HIGHLIGHTS: Attracts birds, butterflies, bees & other pollinators
Grows in a range of soils
Flowering and fruiting May to October

LIGHT EXPOSURE: Full sun to part shade
SOIL: Occasionally dry to moist
HEIGHT & WIDTH: H: 3’–5’  W: 1’–3’
FORM: Erect, clumping
ZONE: 3–9
AMERICAN ALUMROOT
*Heuchera americana*

A clump-forming evergreen perennial found in dryish locations in rocky open woodlands and along ledges and crevices of bluffs. The leaves emerge in a dense spiral from a short central crown and can be green or variegated in shades of purple, bronze, or cream. They are 3–5” wide, heart-shaped with rounded, toothed lobes. Foliage is evergreen in warm winter climates, with fall colors in shades of purple, red, and yellow. The tiny, bell-shaped flowers are greenish or creamy with a pinkish tint and emerge on mostly leafless stalks above the foliage. Fruit is a dark red oval capsule. In the South, it prefers shade in the afternoon. Divide clumps every 3–5 years in the spring to rejuvenate plants.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**
- Attracts specialized bees & other pollinators
- Good deer-resistant groundcover
- Blooms from April to June
- Fruits shortly after blooming

**LIGHT EXPOSURE:** Full sun to part shade

**SOIL:** Moist (not wet) to dry

**HEIGHT & WIDTH:** H: 1’–3’  W: 1’–1.5’

**FORM:** Low, clumping

**ZONE:** 4–9
CAROLINA PHLOX
*Phlox carolina*

This phlox species grows in many habitats, from somewhat moist to rich places, in open to medium-growth forests, wooded borders, and road banks, mostly in partial sun. Flower colors are in the cool range of lavender to pink or occasionally white, held in baseball-size rounded clusters at the top of stems. Each flower has a long tube and 5 flaring lobes; the small, round fruit capsules mature in late summer. The leaves are 1.5–4” long, bright-green, oval to lance-shaped, and leathery, with untoothed edges. Carolina Phlox provides a splash of color after most spring blooms have finished and continues to bloom intermittently until frost. It is somewhat resistant to powdery mildew. Plants may self-sow but are not aggressive.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**
- Attracts birds, butterflies, bees & other pollinators
- Blooms from May to July
- Fruits shortly after flowering

**LIGHT EXPOSURE:** Full sun to part shade

**SOIL:** Occasionally dry to moist

**HEIGHT & WIDTH:** H: 1’–5’  W: 1’–2’

**FORM:** Erect, clumping, compact

**ZONE:** 5–9
SLENDER MOUNTAIN-MINT

Pycnanthemum tenuifolium

This fine-textured, deciduous plant can be found in wet meadows, moist spots in powerline clearings, edges of moist woods, bogs, and other mostly sunny spots with some moisture. It usually grows in colonies, producing an extensive white patch when in full bloom. The main stems develop short side branches along most of their length, with narrow, almost needle-like leaves. Small whitish flowers with a touch of pink in rounded flat-topped clusters mature into small black seeds eaten by numerous animals. Fall color is dull yellow to brown. All parts of the plant have a minty aroma when crushed. Like most mints it can spread, so give it plenty of space or keep cut back. A pollinator magnet.

HIGHLIGHTS:
- Attracts birds, butterflies, bees & other pollinators
- Blooms from June to August
- Fruits from September to October

LIGHT EXPOSURE: Full sun to part shade
SOIL: Occasionally dry to moist
HEIGHT & WIDTH: H: 2’–3’ W: 2’–3’
FORM: Mounding, fine-textured
ZONE: 4–8
ORANGE CONEFLOWER
*Rudbeckia fulgida*

This perennial Black-eyed Susan grows from moist to dry edges, powerline cuts, and openings in woodlands, but blooms later than the annual *Rudbeckia hirta*, also called Black-eyed Susan. The flower heads may be up to 3” wide, with purplish-brown center disks surrounded by golden petals that may have a dark blotch at their base. Flowering is among the latest of the black-eyed Susans and continues for almost 3 months. Fruits resemble thistle seeds and are relished by goldfinches. Leaves at the base of the stem form an evergreen rosette, making a good winter ground cover. The stem leaves are alternate, toothed, and rough-hairy. This plant spreads moderately by underground runners; to keep it in check, don’t overwater.

HIGHLIGHTS: Attracts birds, butterflies, bees & other pollinators
Blooms and fruits August to October
Somewhat deer resistant
Seed heads provide winter interest

LIGHT EXPOSURE: Full sun
SOIL: Moist to dry
HEIGHT & WIDTH: H: 2’–3’  W: 1’–2’
FORM: Spreading
ZONE: 3–9
BLUESTEM GOLDENROD
Solidago caesia

A delicate goldenrod found in moist woodlands, the edges of bottomlands, and in generally rich, shaded, upland soils. While most goldenrods have flowers at the end of the stems, the flowers of Bluestem Goldenrod occur along the upper stems where the leaves attach. Fruit is an oblong nutlet dispersed by wind. The dark-green, alternate, lance-shaped leaves are sometimes toothed and may be hairy or smooth; leaves are shorter near the tip of the stems. The stems arch and often branch; they tend to have a waxy surface and may be blue-purple or just plain green. One of the few goldenrods that bloom well in light shade. Its nectar and pollen can attract a wide variety of insects.

HIGHLIGHTS:
- Attracts birds, butterflies, bees & other pollinators
- Blooms and fruits August to October
- Fine-textured delicate look
- Somewhat deer resistant

LIGHT EXPOSURE:
- Full sun to part shade

SOIL:
- Moist

HEIGHT & WIDTH:
- H: 1’–3’ W: 1’–3’

FORM:
- Arching, branched clump

ZONE:
- 4–8
Heartleaf Aster grows in moist, rich soils of hardwood forests and slopes, streambanks, and shady roadsides, especially in less acidic soil. Stout flowering stalks with narrow foliage tower above the dark green heart-shaped, toothed basal foliage. The flower clusters are elongate and rather triangular in outline, with smallish heads containing white to blue-purple petals and yellow center disks that fade to red. The blooms add a coolness to the lingering heat of early fall. Pinching back stems several times before mid-July will help control plant height and promote bushiness. Often abundantly self-seeds in the garden if not deadheaded. It does not tolerate poorly drained locations. Also known as Blue Wood Aster and previously known as *Aster cordifolius*.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**
- Attracts birds, butterflies, bees & other pollinators
- Blooms and fruits September to October
- Somewhat deer resistant

**LIGHT EXPOSURE:** Full sun to part shade

**SOIL:** Moist to occasionally dry

**HEIGHT & WIDTH:** H: 1’–4’ W: 1’–2’

**FORM:** Upright, clumping

**ZONE:** 3–8
Invasive Plants

Non-native species that displace native plant communities

To give native plants a chance to thrive, first remove any non-native invasive plants from your yard. The nursery trade has introduced some invasive plants, like Bradford Pear, while others, such as Japanese Stilt-grass, have been introduced unintentionally.

Unfortunately, many non-native invasive plants are still available at nurseries. Learning how to recognize and avoid them is one way you can help curb their spread. Also, understanding an invasive plant’s life cycle will aid in choosing the best way to eliminate it.

The North Carolina Native Plant Society lists plants that are invasive in our state; another useful source that includes information on invasive plant control is the N.C. Invasive Plant Council, at nc-ipc.weebly.com. Look for the link to our Invasive Plant List at ncwildflower.org.

Listed are a few common invasive plants found in Piedmont landscapes.

**Trees:**
Bradford Pear, *Pyrus calleryana*
Mimosa, *Albizia julibrissin*
Princess Tree, *Paulownia tomentosa*
Tree-of-Heaven, *Ailanthus altissima*

**Shrubs:**
Autumn Olive, *Elaeagnus umbellata*
Burning Bush, *Euonymus alatus*
Bush Honeysuckles, *Lonicera fragrantissima* & *L. maackii*
Butterfly Bush, *Buddleja davidii*
Leatherleaf Mahonia, *Berberis bealei*
Nandina, *Nandina domestica*
Privets, *Ligustrum japonicum*, *L. sinense* & *L. vulgare*

**Vines:**
Asian Wisteria, *Wisteria floribunda* & *W. sinensis*
English Ivy, *Hedera helix*
Japanese Honeysuckle, *Lonicera japonica*
Oriental Bittersweet, *Celastrus orbiculatus*
Periwinkle, *Vinca major* & *V. minor*
Porcelain-berry, *Ampelopsis glandulosa*
Sweet Autumn Clematis, *Clematis terniflora*
Wintercreeper, *Euonymus fortunei*

**Grasses:**
Chinese Silver Grass, *Miscanthus sinensis*
Japanese Stilt-grass, *Microstegium vimineum*
Cinnamon Fern (TLM)
The North Carolina Native Plant Society, Inc.
ncnps.org

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