

Segment for Week of 4 June 2021

Native Plants

This is Julie Callahan bringing you information on shore friendly living and gardening from the Master Gardeners and Virginia Cooperative Extension. This week I will be talking to you about native plants and their benefits to wildlife and our landscapes.

Native plants evolved and spread without human involvement in response to the unique characteristics of a region: the climate, soils, timing of rainfall, drought, and frost. Their evolution was also influenced by other local species with which they formed complex and interdependent relationships. By providing food and shelter specially adapted to meet the needs of native animal species, native plants provide a practical and ecologically valuable alternative for landscaping.

Native plants offer many advantages to the home gardener. Although maybe not as showy as a non-native or exotic variety, native plants have many desirable attributes and can be beautifully woven into the tapestry of a landscape. As mentioned above, one of their most valuable benefits is that they support native wildlife. Because of this, they attract a greater variety of birds and butterflies to the garden where they can find protection from the elements and from predators. And they provide the nutrition needed for a bird or butterfly to thrive, not just to get his stomach full!

Native plants require less water, fertilizer and pesticide, thus adding fewer chemicals to the landscape and maintaining water quality in nearby streams and rivers. Since well adapted to their surroundings, these plants require very little maintenance, and, once established, often surpass non- natives in ruggedness and resistance to drought, insects and disease.

In recent years, there has been much interest and research focused on native plants

and their influence on healthy functioning ecosystems. Consequently, there are many publications which provide guidance on planting native plants. One of the best sources is the “Virginia Eastern Shore Plant Guide,” available online for download or as hardcopy from [Virginia Native Plant Society](#). Also a search on Virginia Native Plants will yield many sources of information including publications from the [VA Department of Conservation and Recreation](#) and the [Department of Game and Inland Fisheries](#). The Virginia Cooperative Extension also offers many [publications](#) to help the home gardener better understand wise landscape design and maintenance.

For answers to Gardening questions call your local Accomack or Northampton County Extension Office. Here on the Shore call either 678-7946 or 787-1361