

Landscaping with Native Plants



*~ Piedmont Landscape ~
and Naturescape Training*

Across North America, more and more people are discovering the satisfaction of landscaping their homes, schools, businesses and places of worship with native plants.

What Are Native Plants?

Native plants are those that evolved naturally in North America. More specifically, native plants in a particular area are those that were growing naturally in the area before humans introduced plants from distant places. In eastern and central North America, native plants typically grew in communities with species adapted to similar soil, moisture, and weather conditions. Some of the widespread communities included oak-hickory-chestnut and beech-maple forests, tallgrass and shortgrass prairies, and freshwater marshes. Additional communities occupied specialized niches, including savannahs, fens, bogs, flood plains and alpine areas.

Why Landscape with Native Plants?

Landscaping with native plants has several appealing factors.

Native Plants Save Energy

Native plants have evolved and adapted to local conditions over thousands of years. They are vigorous and hardy, therefore can survive winter cold and summer heat. Native plants are resistant to most pests and diseases which, decreases the need for pesticides and herbicides. Once established, they usually require no irrigation, which helps conserve water and save money. Thus, native plants suit today's interest in "low-maintenance" gardening and landscaping.

Native Plants Support the Ecosystem

Native plants meet the food and shelter needs of all wildlife species; bees, wasps and butterflies; grasshoppers, beetles and spiders and thousands of others that sustain and support food webs which songbirds, chipmunks, salamanders, toads and box turtles more visibly demonstrate. At the bottom of the food web, native plants far outperform exotic plants that have characterized landscaping for much of the past century. Some native plants afford better protection for wildlife like songbirds by providing safer nesting sites. Generally, native plants do not become invasive; that is they will not reproduce rampantly, invading and impoverishing the diversity of our remaining natural habitats as an increasing number of exotic plants now do. Each native plant species is a member of a community that includes other plants, animals and microorganisms. The natural balance keeps each species in check, allowing it to thrive in conditions where it is suited, but preventing it from spreading uncontrollably.

Native Plants Improve Water Quality

Native vegetation buffers are particularly effective along streams, lakes and wetlands where they help improve water quality. Native vegetation helps in flood zones and erosion prone sites. Native plants in naturalized drainage ways enhance the infiltration of contaminated stormwater. The dense, deep root systems help by increasing percolation of rainfall into the soil and the many plants absorb and neutralize certain stormwater pollutants like heavy metals, phosphorus, and excess nitrogen. Native vegetation reduces erosion by slowing the velocity of the moving water and trapping soil particles from stormwater before it enters streams.

Native Plants Are Interesting

The diversity of native plants includes interesting flowers and foliage. Native shrubs and trees provide a variety of heights, shapes and textures in the landscape. Many provide winter interest through their bark or seedpods. Another dimension of native plants is their historical and cultural interest. Some plants played a significant role in Native American culture and in the European exploration and settlement. Many species have value as food or medicine and others have been used for cordage, textiles, dyestuffs, or similar domestic purposes. Native plants can provide children and adults with a tangible link to the past and to the future.

Examples of North Carolina Native Plants

TREES	SHRUBS	FLOWERS
Red Maple	Flame Azelea	Violet
Dogwood	Rhododendron	Black-Eyed Susan
Hickory	Elderberry	Coreopsis
Willow Oak	Silky Dogwood	Purple Coneflower
Tulip Poplar	Viburnum	Yellow Jessamine

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*Mecklenburg County Solid Waste Services
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*Special
thanks to:*

*Charlotte Mecklenburg Storm Water Services: www.co.mecklenburg.nc.us/eng
National Wildlife Federation, Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program: www.nwf.org
Wild Ones – Natural Landscapers, Ltd.: www.for-wild.org*



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*Mecklenburg County sponsors Organic Program Workshops
year-round at various locations throughout the county.
These 4-hour workshops offer environmentally friendly
methods for designing and maintaining your yard.
Each workshop includes information on:*

Home and Community Soil Stewardship

How and why to do a soil test, managing soils to improve fertility, decrease erosion, and protect the environment

Toxicity Reduction

Water quality, chemical alternatives and natural methods, proper use, storage and disposal of lawn chemicals

Home Composting

How to turn leaves, yard clippings and kitchen scraps into rich compost that is cost saving and a valuable soil amendment for use with plants

Home Yard Care

Wise lawn care, types of grasses and how to best manage them, grasscycling, and lawn alternatives including groundcovers, natural areas, and mulching

Piedmont Naturescaping

Southern xeriscaping - landscaping for sustainability and easy, low-cost maintenance, using native plants and trees, preventing invasive plants, groundcovers and mulch, water-saving and best irrigation practices

Conservation & Diversification

Habitat and natural gardening, natural landscaping practices that allow for beneficial insects and plants, habitat for wildlife and low maintenance beautification of the landscape

HOW: Pre-registration is required as class size is limited.
Call 336-5359 for a schedule of classes, locations
and to register; or visit our Internet site at:
www.wipeoutwaste.com

FEE: \$10 materials fee includes hands-on instruction from
experts, how-to guide & wire compost bin

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