

NC STATE

Extension Master Gardener

Top ~~10~~ Native Plants to Grow in the Southern Piedmont

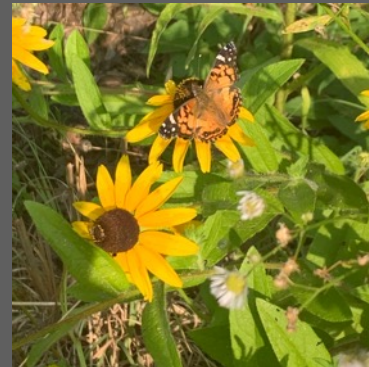
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Union County, NC
April 3, 2025



Learn. Grow. Share.

Native Plants: What and Why?

- What?
 - Native = plants here before European settlement
- Why?
 - Because Science
 - Lazy Gardener Reason



How to Decide Top 10

- Easy to grow
- Easy to maintain
- Pollinator value or other food source
- Long bloom time
- Not huge
- Easy to find (to purchase)
- Deer Resistance
- Alternatives



My Top 10 (IMO)

1. *Rudbeckia hirta* – long bloom time
2. *Asclepias tuberosa* – Monarchs
3. *Pycnanthemum muticum* – pollinator variety
4. *Lonicera sempervirens* – gorgeous vine
5. *Antennaria plantaginifolia* – green mulch/ground cover
6. *Vaccinium corymbosum* – edible shrub
7. *Symphyotrichum oblongifolium* – late bloom time
8. *Solidago rugosa* – pollinator frenzy
9. *Carex* spp. – filler, diverse requirements
10. *Eragrostis spectabilis* – well behaved non-turf grass

Abbreviations

Sun Conditions

- FS=full sun, direct sunlight >6 hours/day
- PS=part sun, direct sunlight 4-6 hours/day
- S=Shade, <4 hours/day direct sunlight

Soil Conditions

- D=dry
- M=moist
- W=wet
- C=Clay ok
- Sh=Shallow
- WD=well drained
- DT=drought tolerant (once established)
- GD=good drainage

Rudbeckia hirta

- AKA Black-eyed Susan
- Requirements:
 - Sun: FS/PS
 - Soil: M-D
- Maintenance: thinning and moving new plants
- Wildlife value: high
- Bloom time: mid-summer to frost
- Size: 1-3'H, spreads
- Easy to find
- Deer Resistance: moderate
- Alternatives: *R. tribloba*, *R. fulgida*



Asclepias tuberosa

- AKA Butterfly weed
- Requirements:
 - Sun: FS
 - Soil: M-D, GD, DT
- Maintenance: self-seeds, doesn't transplant well (taproot)
- Wildlife value: high
- Bloom time: spring-summer
- Size: 1-2'H x 1'W
- Relatively easy to find
- Deer Resistance: high
- Alternatives: *A. incarnata*, *A. syriaca*, *A. verticillata*



Pycnanthemum muticum

- AKA Blunt Mountain Mint
- Requirements:
 - Sun: FS/PS
 - Soil: M, GD
- Maintenance: cut back stems, spreads
- Wildlife value: high
- Bloom time: summer
- Size: 3-4'H, spreads
- Relatively easy to find
- Deer Resistance: high
- Alternatives: *P. tenuifolium*, *P. loomisii*, *P. flexuosum*



Lonicera sempervirens

- AKA Coral Honeysuckle (vine)
- Requirements:
 - Sun: FS/PS
 - Soil: M, WD, C
- Maintenance: needs strong support or can be groundcover
- Wildlife value: high
- Bloom time: most of the year!
- Size: 10-12'H, 3-6'W
- Relatively easy to find
- Deer Resistance: good
- 'Major Wheeler' cultivar



Antennaria *plantaginifolia*

- AKA Pussytoes (groundcover)
- Requirements:
 - Sun: FS/PS/S
 - Soil: M-D, C, Sh
- Maintenance: cut back stems, spreads
- Wildlife value: high
- Bloom time: early spring
- Size: <0.5'H, spreads
- Not easy to find
- Deer Resistance: high
- Alternatives: *A. neglecta*



Vaccinium corymbosum

- AKA Highbush blueberry (shrub)

Requirements:

- Sun: FS/PS
- Soil: M-D, WD, C, Sh
- Maintenance: low pH soil, pruning
- Wildlife value: high
- Bloom time: spring
- Size: 6-12'H, 6-10'W
- Easy to find
- Deer Resistance: low
- Try 'Climax', 'Premier'
- *Alternative: V. arboreum*



Symphotrichum oblongifolium

- AKA Aromatic Aster
- Requirements:
 - Sun: FS
 - Soil: M, WD, C
- Maintenance: cut back stems
- Wildlife value: high
- Bloom time: fall
- Size: 1-3'H, 1-3'W
- Relatively easy to find
- Deer Resistance: good
- Cultivars: 'October Skies', 'Raydon's Favorite'
- Alternatives: *S. laeve*, *S. novae-angliae*, *S. oolentangense*, *S. cordifolium*, *S. georgianum*



*Form, Andrey-Zharkikh CC BY 4.0

Solidago rugosa

- AKA Rough Goldenrod
- Requirements:
 - Sun: FS
 - Soil: W-M-D, C, Sh
- Maintenance: cut back stems
- Wildlife value: high
- Bloom time: summer-fall
- Size: 2-5'H, 2-5'W
- Relatively easy to find
- Deer Resistance: high
- Cultivar: 'Fireworks' 2-3'H x 2-3'W
- Alternatives: *S. speciosa*, *S. juncea*, *S. caesia*
- !!*S. canadensis*, *S. altissima* aggressive!!



form, F. D. Richards CC-BY-SA 2.0

Carex spp.

- AKA Sedge
- Requirements:
 - Sun: FS/PS/S
 - Soil: W-M-D, C, Sh
- Maintenance: cut back dead
- Wildlife value: good
- Bloom time: various
- Size: 0.5-3'H, 0.5-3'W
- Getting easier to find
- Deer Resistance: high
- To consider *C. cherokeensis*, *C. flaccosperma*, *C. grayi*, *C. lupulina*, *C. normalis*, *C. pensylvanica*, *C. texensis*



Eragrostis spectabilis

- AKA Purple Lovegrass
- Requirements:
 - Sun: FS
 - Soil: D, C, DT
- Maintenance: cut back
- Wildlife value: high
- Bloom time: late summer-fall
- Size: 1'H, 1-1.5'W
- Relatively easy to find
- Deer Resistance: high



*form, Katja Schulz CC BY 2.0

Native Plant Care

- Right plant, right place (like all the plants)
- Don't fertilize (generally true)
- Plant a lot, close together, root competition is good
- Chelsea chop tall guys
- More sun usually = better bloom

And then some more...

- *Callicarpa americana*
- *Liatris spicata*
- *Coreopsis* spp.
- *Eupatorium* spp.
- *Stokesia laevis*
- Ferns
- *Aquilegia canadensis*
- *Monarda* spp.
- *Symphyotrichum georgianum*
- *Sisyrinchium angustifolium*
- *Gaillardia* spp.
- Tall Grasses

Callicarpa americana

- AKA Beautyberry
- *C. dichotoma* and *C. japonica* often sold as native
- Requirements:
 - Sun: FS, PS
 - Soil: M-D, C, GD
- Maintenance: prune later winter
- Wildlife value: high
- Bloom time: summer, berries in fall
- Size: 3-8'H, 3-6'W
- Relatively easy to find
- Deer Resistance: good



Comparison of *C. americana*
(back/taller) & *C. dichotoma*
(front) Hope Duckworth [CC BY 4.0](#)

Liatris spicata

- AKA Liatris, Blazing Star
- Requirements:
 - Sun: FS
 - Soil: M-D, C, GD
- Maintenance: low
- Wildlife value: high
- Bloom time: late summer-fall
- Size: 3-6'H, 0.3-1.5'W
- Relatively easy to find
- Deer Resistance: variable



Erect stems with purple flowers.
Kathleen Moore [CC BY 4.0](#)

Coreopsis spp.

- AKA Coreopsis
- Requirements:
 - Sun: FS, PS
 - Soil: M-D, GD
- Maintenance: spreads
- Wildlife value: high
- Bloom time: early spring
- Size: 1-2'H, 6-9"W
- Easy to find
- Deer Resistance: good



Eupatorium spp.

- AKA Boneset
- *E. serotinum*, *E. perfoliatum*
- Requirements:
 - Sun: FS, PS
 - Soil: M, C
- Maintenance: spreads
- Wildlife value: high
- Bloom time: fall
- Size: 4-5'H, 3-5'W
- Relatively easy to find
- Deer Resistance: high



Stokesia laevis

- AKA Stokes Aster
- Requirements:
 - Sun: FS, PS
 - Soil: M-W, GD
- Maintenance: low
- Wildlife value: high
- Bloom time: early summer
- Size: 1-2'H, 1-1.5'W
- Easy to find
- Deer Resistance: good



Ferns

- AKA Christmas, Cinnamon, Shield, Wood, Maidenhair, etc. 31+ native in our region
- https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/find_a_plant/?nc_region_id=3&usda_zone_id=15&plant_type_id=7&plant_type_id=11
- Requirements:
 - Sun: S(hade)
 - Soil: M, GD
- Maintenance: low
- Wildlife value: habitat, food, nesting
- Bloom time: NA
- Size: 0.5-6'H, 0.5-4'W
- Relatively easy to find
- Deer Resistance: high



Aquilegia canadensis

- AKA Columbine
- Requirements:
 - Sun: FS, PS
 - Soil: M-D, C, GD
- Maintenance: spreads
- Wildlife value: high
- Bloom time: early spring
- Size: 1-3'H, 1-1.5'W
- Relatively easy to find
- Deer Resistance: good



Copper colored
Heuchera growing
in the middle of the
columbine

Monarda spp.

- AKA Bee Balm
- *M. didyma*, *M. fistulosa*
- Requirements:
 - Sun: FS, PS
 - Soil: M-W, C, GD
- Maintenance: cut back
- Wildlife value: high
- Bloom time: late summer
- Size: 2-4'H, 2-3'W
- Easy to find
- Deer Resistance: high



Symphotrichum georgianum

- AKA Georgia Aster
- Requirements:
 - Sun: FS, PS
 - Soil: D, C, GD
- Maintenance: cut back
- Wildlife value: high
- Bloom time: late summer-fall
- Size: 1-3'H, 3-4'W
- Not easy to find
- Deer Resistance: ok



Sisyrinchium angustifolium

- AKA Blue-Eyed Grass
- Requirements:
 - Sun: FS, PS
 - Soil: M, C, GD
- Maintenance: cut back
- Wildlife value: high
- Bloom time: early spring
- Size: 1.6-2'H, 0.5-1'W
- Relatively easy to find
- Deer Resistance: good



Gaillardia spp.

- AKA Blanketflower
- Requirements:
 - Sun: FS
 - Soil: D, Sh, GD
- Maintenance: cut back
- Wildlife value: good
- Bloom time: summer-fall
- Size: 1.5-2'H, 1-1.5'W
- Easy to find
- Deer Resistance: high



Tall Grass

- *Panicum*, *Schizachyrium*, *Erianthus*, *Andropogon*, *Muhlenbergia*, etc
- Requirements:
 - Sun: FS
 - Soil: M-D, C
- Maintenance: cut back
- Wildlife value: high
- Bloom time: summer-fall
- Size: 2-10'H, 1+'W
- Easy to find
- Deer Resistance: high



Finding Plants

- [UNCC Plant Sale 4/10-12/25](#)
- [Wing Haven Plant Sale 4/10-13](#)
- McDowell Nature Preserve Plant Sale 4/11-12
- [EMG Plant Sale 4/26/25](#)
- [CPCC Plant Sale 4/4-5/25](#)
- Farmer's Markets
- [NCNPS Nursery List](#)
- [Wild Ones Nursery List](#)
- [Izel Plants](#)
- [Joyful Butterfly](#)
- Carolina Heritage Nursery (FB)
- Adventures in Herbs (FB)
- Social Media Plant Shares



Resources

1. Photos with title can be found on the NC Plant Toolbox
2. Photos with no title are from my garden in Marvin NC
3. Others are noted with URL
4. NC Plant Toolbox <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu>

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Questions?



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