A Patriotic Garden Theme
In 2007, Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) developed the America's Anniversary Garden to help individuals, communities, and groups commemorate America's 400th Anniversary with a signature landscape, garden, or container planting. These signature gardens have red, white, and blue color schemes. Although the commemoration has passed, this guide continues to be useful for creating a patriotic garden.

What Are Native Plants?
Native plants are those that are indigenous to a region and possess traits that make them uniquely adapted to local conditions. They have evolved over time, adapting to factors specific to their region such as climate, moisture, soils, and interactions with other plants, animals, and insects. They can match the finest cultivated plants in beauty, and tend to be hardier and better able to resist drought, insects, and disease if used in locations that approximate their native environments. Native plants are also well suited for “low-maintenance” gardening and landscaping.

Plant Natives: A Celebration of America’s Natural Heritage
Utilizing native plants in the landscape is a way to respect the natural heritage and cultural interests. Some plants played a significant role in Native American culture or in European exploration and settlement. English colonists brought with them seeds, bulbs, and roots of their favorite plants so their gardens became a blend of Old World favorites and the native plants they found in the New World. Native species such as dogwood (Cornus florida) and fringetree (Chionanthus virginicus) were documented by early 18th century plantmen and were noted for their beauty and interest, not unlike their appeal to gardeners today.

Native vs. Non-native Species
Non-natives are species that have been introduced to an area and did not evolve and naturally adapt to the specific ecological conditions of a region. Some non-native or alien species have difficulty thriving without extra maintenance such as irrigation, fertilization, and pest control. Other nonnative species can get out of control and create an unhealthy monoculture with little space remaining for native species. Non-native species that grow in this manner are called “invasive species.” Unlike some plants introduced from other areas, native species rarely become invasive when grown in their natural regions.

Native Plants for Wildlife
Native butterflies, hummingbirds, songbirds, beneficial insects, and small mammals are accustomed to the food and habitat provided by plants native to a region. Native plants provide familiar sources of food and shelter, especially important in urban and suburban settings as natural habitats are replaced with development. Native
plants have qualities and adaptive traits that make them aesthetically pleasing, practical, and ecologically valuable for landscaping. Even small gardens and container plantings can attract wildlife. A variety of native plants will attract different species of wildlife and contribute to a healthy ecosystem.

Locating Native Plants

The native plant suggestions chosen for the America’s Anniversary Garden program exhibit the signature red, white, and blue color scheme. The plants were selected in cooperation with the Virginia Native Plant Society. Although there are numerous websites and specialty nurseries that cater to native plant enthusiasts, the recommended selections were chosen for their availability at local garden centers, nurseries, specialty growers, and retailers of plants that offer nursery-propagated species.

Site Assessment, Planning, and Design

A benefit of designing with native plants is their ability to grow under a wide variety of conditions. Assess your site for sun, shade, soil type, and drainage. Understand the minimum and maximum light and moisture requirements for each species and be sure to group them according to their cultural requirements. You can integrate a few of the suggested native plants into a patriotic garden design of mixed plants or choose to plant an all-native design. Natives will add a naturalistic design element to your landscape and can be added in stages. Also assess your weed population prior to planting. Eliminating weeds prior to planting is easier and less time consuming than trying to control them in a newly planted site.

Soil Preparation

Native plants are adapted to a variety of native soils. If you choose a plant that is adapted to your existing soil, little or no soil amendment is needed. If your original topsoil has been removed, either purchase similar topsoil or add some amendments to improve the subsoil. Simulate your own native soils by incorporating minimal amounts of manure and organic matter such as composted leaves.

Care and Maintenance

It will take time for your native-plant garden to become well established. Irrigation is critical for the two to three weeks after planting or longer, depending on season and rainfall. A good rule of thumb for the first growing season after planting is for plants to receive an inch of water a week. You can measure this with a rain gauge or any straight-sided container. Pruning will be necessary for fast growing species and to maintain the visual quality you desire. Clipping spent flowers and branch tips will encourage plant fullness and longer bloom times for perennials. Some plants have very ornamental seed heads that you may want to leave for winter interest. Native plants typically do not need fertilization and many actually prefer poor soils.

A Final Word

The America’s Anniversary Garden™ program provides publications and information to assist gardeners in achieving confidence, success, beauty, and enjoyment as they compose their gardens and landscapes. Plant suggestions in these publications focus on easy-to-grow plants to assist in successful gardens. Planting a patriotic red, white and blue garden will provide personal satisfaction, an opportunity to showcase Virginia’s proud heritage, and a visual pleasure for all to see.
# Red, White, and Blue Native Plants For Virginia Gardens - All Regions

**Sponsored by John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Botanical Name</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Wildlife Value</th>
<th>Blooms</th>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Dry/Wet</th>
<th>Light</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trees</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Amelanchier canadensis</td>
<td>Serviceberry</td>
<td>F, N, S</td>
<td>Apr-May</td>
<td>10’ - 20’</td>
<td>W-D</td>
<td>LS-SU</td>
<td>White blooms, red fall foliage, red fruit</td>
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<td>May-Jun</td>
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<td>Cornus florida</td>
<td>Flowering Dogwood</td>
<td>F, L</td>
<td>Apr-May</td>
<td>15’ - 30’</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>LS-SU</td>
<td>White blooms, red fruit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilex opaca</td>
<td>American Holly</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>May-Jun</td>
<td>15’ - 40’</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SU-LS</td>
<td>White flowers, red fruit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nyssa sylvatica</td>
<td>Black Gum</td>
<td>F, S</td>
<td>Apr-Jun</td>
<td>30’ - 60’</td>
<td>M-W</td>
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**Wildlife Value: D=deer resistant; F=fruit; H=attracts hummingbirds; L=larvae host; N=butterfly nectar; S=attracts songbirds**

**Soil: D=dry; M=moist; W=wet**

**Light: LS=light shade; PS=part sun; SH=shade; SU=sun**
Resources

Publications


Web Resources

Virginia Native Plant Society:
http://vnps.org

Native Plants for Conservation, Restoration, and Landscaping,
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation,
www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/nativeplants.shtml

Native Plant Information Network, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center,
www.wildflower.org/explore/

Gardens of Colonial Williamsburg, Gardening, Colonial Williamsburg,
www.history.org/history/CWLand/index.cfm

Colonial Williamsburg Foundation,
www.history.org/foundation/

Acknowledgments

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Photos by Harold Jerrell, Extension agent, Lee County, and Bonnie Appleton (deceased), Extension horticulturist, Hampton Roads Agricultural Research and Extension Center, Virginia Beach.

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Wild Stonecrop (Sedum ternatum)