

Native Shrubs for Our Local Community

The Importance of Native Plant Species in Our Landscapes

As native habitat is developed and our suburbs expand and sprawl, the food and shelter that were once abundant for our wildlife shrink. The American Audubon society estimates that our native bird population has decreased 30% since 1966. When we think of birds and wildlife, we often forget that insects are a critical food source. As we develop land and plant non-native plants in our suburbs we change the habitat that supports the insects that support the birds, etc.

Although insects can take pollen and nectar from almost any flowering source, what we forget is that the larval stage of those insects rely on leaves. Insects have evolved as specialist feeders. They have evolved to eat specific plants. Planting native trees and shrubs helps ensure that our insect populations have a stable food source that in turn feeds our birds.

A chickadee needs 350-500 caterpillars a day to raise a clutch of nestlings. It takes 16-18 days to raise a clutch. That is 6000-9000 caterpillars to raise a nest full of babies to maturity.

As with any plant list, we remind you to look up the specific needs and habit of all plants to determine how that will work in your landscape BEFORE you buy. Visit our Resources page for local specifics.

Native Plant Species for NJ and MidAtlantic Region - Large Shrubs (10+ feet)



American Plum (*Prunus americana*)

American Plum, or Wild Plum, is a shrub or small tree with a short trunk, broad crown, and thorny, reddish-brown branches and twigs. Its large, showy, white flowers bloom in April and May, followed by fruit that ripens to bright red in August and September and provides an important source of food for many species of birds. American Plum grows up to 35 feet tall in full sun to shade, and in moist, rich, well-drained soils.

Choke Cherry (*Prunus virginiana*)

This perennial, deciduous shrub or small tree grows 20 to 30 feet tall with reddish-brown twigs. The red cherries become black as they ripen from July through August, and provide an important source of food for browsers, small mammals, and many species of birds. It grows in dry to moist, well-drained loams, in full sun to partial shade, and is tolerant to drought and dry/shallow-rocky soil. Choke Cherry is also a larval host for many species of butterflies and moths.



Common Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)

This perennial, deciduous shrub also goes by Michigan Holly, growing 6 to 10 feet tall normally, with purplish green foliage that turns black at the first frost. Small flowers bloom during the spring and early summer, followed by clusters of bright red berries that persist throughout the winter. This tree tolerates a variety of conditions, growing in full sun to shade, in dry to wet, sandy to clayey soils. Plant one male for every 5 female plants.

Attracts robins, mockingbirds, catbirds, thrushes.

Eastern Wahoo (*Euonymus atropurpureus*)

Other common names for this plant include Burning bush and Spindle Tree. It is a deciduous shrub or small tree that grows up to 25 feet tall with an irregular, spreading crown and lime-green foliage that turns red in the fall. It produces small purple flowers, followed by showy, red fruit pods that split in late summer to fall, revealing crimson seeds. Eastern Wahoo grows in fertile, moist soils, and though shade tolerant, it also grows well in full sun.



Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*)

Is a deciduous shrub also known as American elder, sweet elder and pie elder. In spring the plant is covered with flat clusters of tiny white flowers that ripen to purple-black fruits. A fast-growing, shallow-rooted shrub that can reach 12 feet tall with a six-foot spread, the elderberry is happy with full sun to partial shade in moist but well-drained soils.

Pussy Willow (*Salix discolor*)

This is a narrow, deciduous, perennial shrub or small tree that grows to 20 feet in height. It has multiple trunks and dark-gray, scaly bark, and leaves that are shiny, broad, and bright-green. Furry catkins begin appearing during late winter and early spring, the flower buds bursting and exposing silky hairs. This plant is short-lived, growing in full sun and moist soils. Do not confuse with non-native varieties.



Great Laurel (*Rhododendron maximum*)

Rhododendron maximum, also known as wild rhododendron, is a large glossy-leaved evergreen shrub that boasts showy trusses of white to purple-pink flowers blooming later than most rhododendron. This is one of the hardiest and largest in the rhodie family, growing 5-15 feet tall with a similar spread, doing its best in part shade with rich, moist, humus-y, acid soil. Beautiful in a naturalistic garden, or a cottage border.

Inkberry or Smooth-leaf Holly (*Ilex Glabra*)

A smooth leaf evergreen holly native to the east coast, Inkberry can grow 5–8 feet without pruning. There are now cultivars available that resemble small boxwood and top out at around 3 feet tall. A lovely choice for informal hedging or for low formal repetition in a garden.



Stag-Horn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*)

Also called Velvet Sumac, this perennial, deciduous shrub grows in colonies reaching 15 to 30 feet in height with crooked trunks, velvety twigs, and green foliage that turns vivid shades of red and yellow in the fall. Their most notable feature (on female plants) is their yellow green flowers that give way to upright clusters of fuzzy, bright red berries that attract a wide variety of bird species. Drought tolerant, it grows in full sun to shade, and in dry, rocky, and gravelly soils.



Medium and small shrubs (5-10 feet)



Black Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*)

This deciduous, spreading shrub typically grows 3 to 6 feet in height and width. It grows clusters of showy white flowers that give way to black, bitter berries often used to make jams and jellies. This

plant can grow in full sun to partial shade, and in moist, well-drained soils, though it grows fruits best in full sun. Foliage deepens to deep purples and burgundies in autumn.

Blackhaw (*Viburnum prunifolium*)

This viburnum is an easy to grow shrub that handles medium to dry, well-drained soils in full sun to part shade. It is drought tolerant once established and can be trained into tree-form. Typically grows 12-15 feet in height with a spread of 6-12 feet. White flowers appear in spring and give way to blue black berry-like drupes which often persist into fall and winter. Prune immediately after flowering as next year's buds set in summer for following year. A great choice for birds and wildlife. The broad green leaves turn shades of red and purple in autumn. Fruits are edible and can be made into jams and jellies. Attracts cardinals, catbirds, robins, sparrows, thrashers, waxwings, grouse.



Black Raspberry (*Rubus occidentalis*)

Also known as Thimbleberry, this perennial shrub produces 3- to 5-foot-long thorny stems. It is commonly found in large colonies, blooming white flowers in May and June, and producing dark, purple-black fruit in the late summer. This plant can grow in full sun to shade, in dry, moist, and gravelly soils. It provides a source of food for birds and mammals, and nesting materials for native bees.

Common Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)

This plant is also known as Button Willow. It is a perennial, deciduous shrub that usually grows 6 to 12 feet tall and has a twisting trunk and crooked branches. Small, white flowers grow to form a distinctive, dense, spherical cluster with protruding pistils, and the fruits are brown and button-like in appearance. This shrub grows in partial to full shade, and in a variety of moist to wet soils including loam, clay, limestone, and sandy soils. The flowers and fruits attract many pollinators and birds.



False Indigo (*Amorpha fruticosa*)

False Indigo is a deciduous native shrub in the bean family with lovely lupine-like flowers in shades of purple. It tolerates a wide range of soil types from moist streambanks to drier uplands. Plant in full sun. Its leaves give a fine, airy texture to this plant which spreads wider than it is tall by suckers. Give it some space.



Gray Dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*)

This perennial, deciduous shrub grows 10 to 15 feet tall, and often forms thickets. It features white flowers that bloom during May and June, and produce small, white berries. It grows in full sun to shade, and typically occurs in moist, rocky soils. This shrub attracts butterflies as well as birds and other wildlife that eat its fruit.

Highbush Blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*)

This deciduous, perennial shrub grows 6 to 12 feet high, with a similar width. The foliage is an attractive reddish-green during the spring before turning blue-green in the summer and red, orange, yellow, and purple in the fall. It produces clusters of white or pink, bell-shaped flowers followed by edible, blue to black fruit in late July to mid-August. This shrub is adaptable, growing in full sun to shade, and in dry to wet soils. It attracts a wide variety of wildlife, including birds and mammals that enjoy the berries, as well as browsers like deer that eat the foliage.





Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*)

This east coast native is the state flower for Pennsylvania and Connecticut. An evergreen shrub reaching 5-15 feet tall that thrives in rich, well-drained, acidic soils, this plant often grows in large colonies covering forest floors. Its flowers combine to form a large ball, that range from light pink to a darker rosy color, covering the plant for several weeks in May-

June. Plants tolerate full sun to full shade but do best in part shade. Prune lightly after flowering.

Maple-Leaf Arrow-Wood (*Viburnum acerifolium*)

Also called Maple-leaf Viburnum, this perennial, deciduous shrub is densely branched, reaching 4 to 6 feet in height and 3 to 4 in width. It grows green maple-like leaves that turn an attractive shade of purplish-pink in the fall, clusters of small, white flowers that bloom from April to August, and red to blue-black berries. This plant grows in full sun to shade, and in a variety of dry to moist soils including rocky, sandy, loamy, and clayey soils. It attracts cardinals, catbirds, robins, sparrows, thrashers, waxwings, grouse, butterflies, bees, and other nectar insects.



Northern Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*)

Also known as Wild Allspice, this deciduous, perennial shrub displays glossy leaves and light, slender green branches that grow 6 to 12 feet tall. Out of its aromatic foliage bloom dense clusters of tiny, pale yellow flowers, followed by glossy red fruit. The leaves turn a colorful golden-yellow in the fall. This plant grows in full sun to shade, in dry to wet, well-drained soils. It serves as a larval host for a number of butterfly species. It can form thickets.

Pink Azalea (*Rhododendron periclymenoides*)

Also called Pinxterbloom Azalea and Pinxterflower, this perennial, deciduous shrub grows 6 to 12 feet in height, with picturesque, horizontal branching. It produces large clusters of funnel-shaped, pink or white flowers appearing before or with the leaves. Pink Azalea grows best in partial shade, and in a variety of well-drained soils. The smooth, medium-green foliage turns dull yellow in the fall, and the tubular shape of the flowers is a good indicator that this plant attracts hummingbirds and butterflies.



Possumhaw (*Viburnum nudum*)

This is a rounded, deciduous shrub that typically grows 5 to 6 feet tall. It produces clusters of flat-topped, white flowers followed by berries in the fall that ripen to vivid shades of pink and blue, with both colors often found in the same cluster. Possumhaw is an adaptable plant, growing in full sun to shade and moist to wet soils, and tolerating cold, flood, and disease. Attracts cardinals, catbirds, robins, sparrows, thrashers, waxwings, grouse.

Red Chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*)

Red Chokeberry or Red Chokecherry is a deciduous, perennial, 6- to 12-foot-tall shrub that is native to both wet and dry thickets. During the spring, clusters of white flowers with red anthers appear, while bright red fruits ripen in the fall and persist on the shrub well into winter. It grows best in full sun, and in moist, rich soils.



Native Wild Rose (*Rosa Virginiana*) aka Prairie Rose, Virginia Rose



Virginia Rose is a woody perennial suckering shrub in the rose family native to eastern North America that grows 4-6 feet tall. It is the best of the native roses to grow in the garden. It has pink open flowers in June to Aug. and the stems have numerous hooked prickles. It likes full sun, is easy to transplant, and prefers well-drained acidic soils but is adaptable. It is also salt tolerant. The fall color is lovely. Grow this rose instead of the non-native varieties to provide food for the wildlife from the flowers to the rose hips and beauty in your landscape.

Silky Dogwood (Cornus amomum)

This 6- to 12-foot-tall deciduous shrub gets its name from the silky hairs found on its twigs and leaf undersides. Clusters of yellowish white flowers bloom in the late spring to early summer, followed by drupes that change from white to blue and attract birds. It grows in full sun to partial shade, but can tolerate almost full shade, and prefers moist, slightly acidic soils.



Smooth Sumac (Rhus glabra)

This fast-growing, colony-forming, deciduous shrub usually grows 3 to 10 feet tall with a single trunk and several leafy branches, its foliage turning a stunning bright red in early fall. It has male and female plants, individual plants producing either all male or female flowers, blooming late spring to mid-summer. On female shrubs the yellowish flowers are replaced by bunches of dark red berries that mature during the autumn and persist into winter. This plant can grow in full sun to shade, and in most dry soils, including sandy, loam, and clay. Attracts attracts myriad bird species birds from wrens to game-birds.

Southern Arrow-Wood (Viburnum dentatum)

This perennial, deciduous shrub grows multiple, arching branches that reach 6 to 8 feet tall. It grows downy twigs, shiny leaves that turn yellow to red in the fall, and clusters of small, white flowers that give way to dark blue berries. This plant grows in full sun to shade, in dry to wet soils including sands. It is flood tolerant and attracts a variety of bird, mammal, and butterfly species.



Southern Bayberry (Myrica or Morella cerifera)

This plant is also known by the common names Wax Myrtle, Candleberry, and Tallow Shrub. It is a wispy, evergreen shrub that can reach up to 20 feet in height but usually stays within 6 to 12 feet. It produces olive-green foliage with a spicy aroma, and pale blue berries on female plants in the winter. This plant grows in full sun to partial shade, and in moist to wet soils. It needs to be kept moist constantly until it becomes established, after which it can tolerate both drought and flooding. Attracts blackbirds, bluebirds, chickadees.

Sweetbells (Leucothoe racemosa)

A deciduous shrub, which suckers (grows shoots from the base) to form colonies. Its white, fragrant, bell-shaped flowers bloom May-June. The leaves turn red in the fall. This shrub prefers moist, acidic soil. Use Sweetbells in borders and foundations, or for stabilizing slopes.



Virginia Sweetspire (Itea)

Virginia Sweetspire is a native deciduous to semi-evergreen shrub that can grow up to 8 feet tall though there are shorter cultivars on the market. In early summer, small, fragrant, white flowers bloom on graceful arching branches. Fall color is red to purple and lasts well into winter.

Virginia Sweetspire prefers moist, rich, slightly acidic humusy soils in partial sun to partial shade, but tolerates a wide range of soil conditions and pHs. Best flowering occurs with 4 hours of sun per day. It can form dense colonies by root suckering and can be used for erosion control in wet areas or on wet banks. This plant blooms on previous season's wood, so pruning should be done after flowering. Use in a mass for spectacular spring flowers.



Wild Hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*)

Sometimes also called Sevenbark, Wild Hydrangea is a perennial, deciduous shrub that usually grows 3 to 6 feet tall, infrequently reaching 10 feet. It produces dense, flat-topped clusters of greenish-white flowers from June to August as well as a few larger flowers on the sides of the clusters. This fast-growing but short-lived plant grows best in partial shade and moist, rich, well-drained soils.

Small and Low-growing Shrubs (up to 5 feet)

Inkberry Holly (*Ilex Glabra*)

A smooth leaf evergreen holly native to the east coast, Inkberry can grow 5–8 feet without pruning. There are now cultivars available that resemble small boxwood and top out at around 3 feet tall. A lovely choice for informal hedging or for low formal repetition in a garden.



Red Bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*)

Also known as Kinnikinnick and Pinemat Manzanita, it is a mat-forming, evergreen shrub that grows 6 to 12 inches tall and up to 6 feet wide. In the spring, it produces lovely white and pink, bell-shaped flowers that later turn into red berries. True to its name, the fruits of this plant are enjoyed by bears, as well as birds and other wildlife. It can grow in full sun to shade, and in dry to moist rocky or sandy, acid soils.