

GROW WITH EXTENSION

Go native for your garden



Lloyd Singleton

My favorite Wendell Berry quote is “There are no unsacred places; there are only sacred places and desecrated places”. Desecrated means to treat a sacred place or thing with violent disrespect; violate. Have we humans violated the home of other living organisms as we build our cities and suburbs and roads and farms? Bulldoze, chainsaw, plowing, paving – might seem like quite violent disrespect in the eyes of a butterfly or ant or snake.

In our attempts to reintroduce nature to the areas we disturb, we frequently rely on a few introduced plant species in prescribed configuration. Our constructed landscapes often consist of a monoculture of warm-season lawn grass of Asian origin, an easy-to-grow *Crape Myrtle*, and a soldier-like row of shrubs with ornamental value but of little interest to resident insects.

Not to be totally disparaging, these plants can have a place in our landscapes. But what is missing? Where is the living habitat for the fauna that evolved in this place? Gone are the tall grass prairies, the multi-species forest stands, the understory plants that provide food and shelter for the native wildlife who were here before we were. I suggest it's time to re-evaluate what we are putting in our gardens to create native-plant sanctuaries that allow wildlife to recover.

Native plant species will keep the food web healthy; oaks, poplars, and cherries are important trees. Joe-pye weed, rattlesnake master and Virginia sweetspire deserve a spot in your yard for the poetic names alone. The contrasting colors and textures of native grasses such as river oats, pink Muhlygrass and little bluestem are remarkable, and don't need mowing.

The Native Plant Alliance will host its fifth annual Native Plant Festival, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 19. This free event celebrates Cape Fear area native plants. The festival is redesigned this year as a hybrid virtual/



The native plant demonstration garden at the New Hanover County Arboretum is a featured stop for the Native Plant Festival self-guided tour on Saturday, Sept. 19. [CONTRIBUTED PHOTO]

in-person event, offering online presentations by local horticultural experts and a self-guided tour of area nurseries that sell native plants. The participating nurseries are inviting the public to their farms and nurseries, to view and purchase native plants. A tour map, available online at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/ec75f12149a84ce686e-168b71d878e10>, indicates hours each location is open the day of the event.

Participating plant sellers will be Five Oaks Nursery & Tree Farm, Lloyd's Nursery, and Transplanted Garden. Shelton Herb Farm is also on the tour and is hosting Lumber River Nursery and Grizz's Nursery to sell their plants. Going Native Gardens will pre-sell five species of native perennials with pick-up at Wild Bird & Garden's Wilmington location the day of the festival. Wild Bird & Garden will sell items to support birds, bees, and birdwatching fans.

The tour map also lists locations of some community landscapes where one can see native plants used in a landscaped setting.

Some of these are public gardens; others are places where native plants have been used to beautify storefronts and common areas.

Horticultural experts will give virtual presentations on a variety of topics, and include: Camilla Herlevich, Paul Hosier, Trena McNabb, Beth Sheppard, Roger Shew, Lloyd Singleton, and Becky Skiba, with a special showing of a presentation by Doug Tallamy, author of *Bringing Nature Home*. Visit <https://arboretum.nhcgov.com/events/> for links to presentations and to sign up to attend the speaker Q&A sessions.

Please consider participating in this festival to assist as you seek to create and venerate sacred spaces of native plants in your landscape. The New Hanover County Arboretum and its native plant garden is free and open every day from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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