

# Perennials for Pollinators



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Joe-Pye Weed  
*Eutrochium dubium*

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# Perennials for Pollinators

- Meet the pollinators
- What makes some flowers better for pollinators?
- Selecting plants that will thrive in your yard
- Recommended perennials for SE NC
- NC State Extension resources



*Agastache foeniculum*

# Meet the Pollinators!



Butterflies,  
Skippers,  
and Moths



Honey Bees and  
Native Bees



Wasps, Beetles and other insects



Birds and Bats

# Why Do We Need Them?

- **Three fourths of the flowering plants** on earth rely on animal mediated pollination to reproduce
  - Food webs and ecosystems depend on pollinators
- **1/3 of the world's crop production** relies on pollination!
  - \$19 billion annually in US alone!





# Which group pollinates the most plants?

## Bees are the most efficient pollinators

- Only animals that purposefully collect pollen
- **Pollen** = Protein source, fed to immature bees
- **Also collect nectar** = carbohydrate, consume for energy and turn into honey



# Many types of bees

**Honeybees** are the most well known

- Native to Europe
- Managed for pollination services

Honeybee





# Native Bees

50 species of  
bumble bees!

Over 4000 species of **native bees** in the US! **500 in NC!**

- Also valuable crop pollinators – active even when cool and wet
- Plus pollinate wild plants; Sustain native ecosystems



Squash Bees



Mason Bees



Sweat Bees



# Native Bees

## Most are solitary

- NOT aggressive!!!
- Bumble bees live in small annual colonies

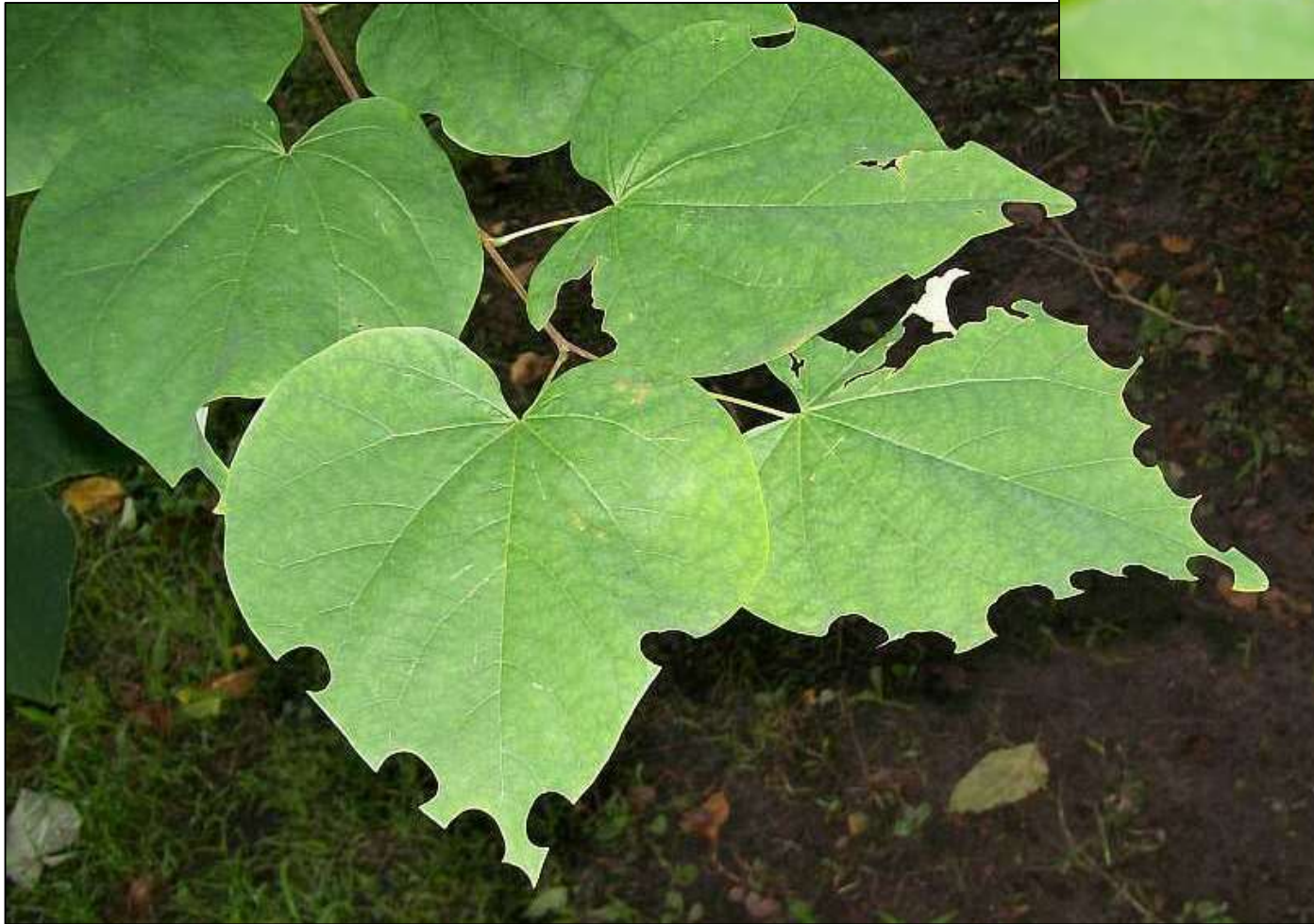
## Most nest in the ground

- Favor south facing slopes with thin vegetation
- Protect habitat areas!
- Not the same as ground-nesting wasps





30% Nest in cavities, hollow stems – eg. leafcutter bees





# ENDANGERED POLLINATORS



# AND THEIR HABITATS

2019 Pollinator Partnership Poster

<https://www.pollinator.org/shop/posters>

# Reasons for Pollinator Decline

- **Habitat loss:** Less nesting sites
- **Forage loss:** Less flowers available in the landscape
  - Development of natural areas
  - Increased use of herbicides
  - Cover crops no longer common in agriculture
- **Pesticide use**
- **Environmental stress**
- **Parasites and diseases** (esp. in honey bees)



Buckwheat = warm season  
cover crop



## One Way You Can Help . . .

- **Plant pollinator-friendly flowers!**
  - Don't treat with insecticides
- **Perennials and woody plants are best**
  - Richer nectar
  - Dependable source year after year

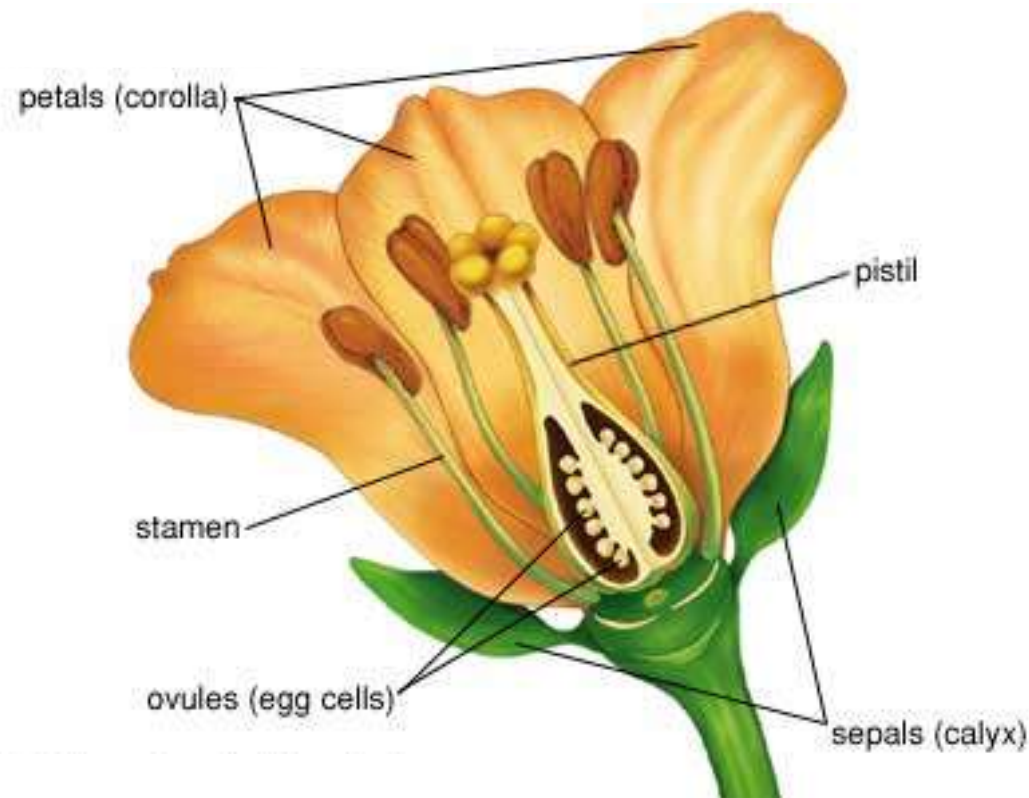


Gayfeather, *Liatris spicata*



# What Makes a Flower Pollinator Friendly?

- **Colorful petals**
- **Ample supply of easily accessible pollen and nectar**
  - **Pollen:** stamen (male)
  - **Nectar:** nectaries, usually within pistil (aka carpel) (female)
- **Not contaminated with pesticides**



# Do all flowers produce pollen and nectar?

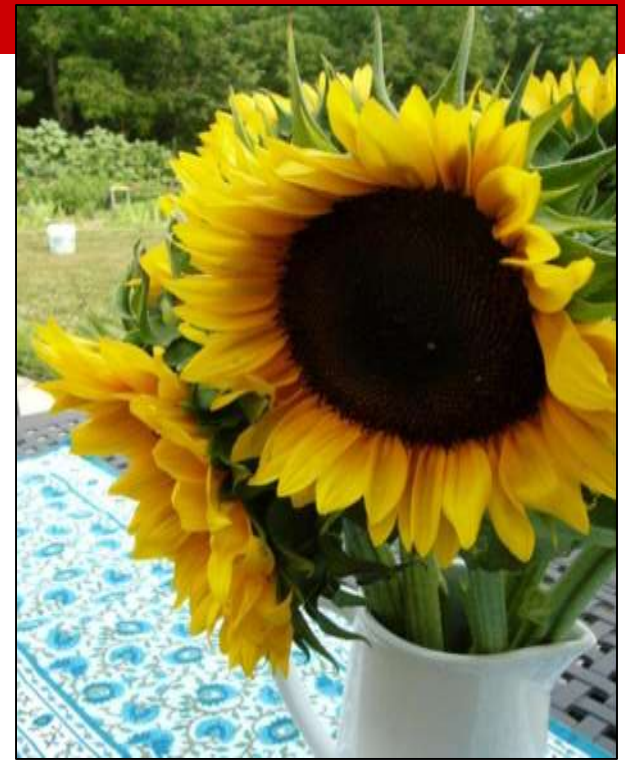
Some produce only pollen

- Wind pollinated, don't need to attract pollinators
- Grasses, grains, some weeds, many trees





**Some flowers are bred to be pollenless, eg. Sunflowers for cutting**



Lacecap



**Others are bred or selected to be sterile –**  
eg. Mophead hydrangeas; lacecap have fertile and sterile flowers



# Pollen and nectar are less accessible or absent in double forms of flowers

- 'Old fashion' single varieties are best for pollinators



## Flowers That Are Most Attractive to Bees

- **Colors:** White, yellow, blue, purple, violet
- **Fragrance:** floral or herbal
- **Open:** during daytime
- **Shapes:** daisy/coneflower/sunflower; shallow tubular; legume (bean/clover); or lots of small flowers together



Aromatic aster,  
*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*



# Daisy/Coneflower Shape



Purple Coneflower

Black Eye Susan





## **Shallow Tubular: Penstemon**



## **Legumes: Baptisia**

## Lots of Small Flowers



Joe Pye Weed



Goldenrod



Agastache



Plants with many small flowers are also attractive to **beneficial insects**



The hover fly is a bee-mimic. Adults feed on nectar (above); larvae feed on aphids (left).

# Planting for Bees: Native Plants

- **Native bees prefer native plants**
  - Native plants 4 times more likely to attract native bees
  - Some native bees feed exclusively on certain plants; Time their emergence to these plants bloom period
- **Including native plants in your landscape will support a greater diversity of pollinators**



Southeastern Blueberry Bee



# Native Plants Support More Than Bees



Doug Tallamy

# Native Where?

- Native is meaningless without location!
- **Think ecoregion, not political boundaries**
- **Greatest benefit:** choose plants from local ecoregion



[Ecoregions of North America](#)

8.5 Southeast Coastal Plains



# Planting for Pollinators: Rule of 3

- Plant for **3 seasons**, spring – fall
- Aim to have at least **3 different species** in bloom each season
- Plant in groups, **at least 3** of each variety



At least 3 species in bloom:  
Bee balm (rear); Black-eye Susans (left);  
Phlox (right)

# Planting for Pollinators

**Focus on sunny areas**  
(4+ hours direct sun)

- Insects must be warmed by the sun!
- Most plants produce more blooms in the sun!
- Plants produce more nectar and insects are more active at warmer temperatures





# Selecting Plants that will thrive in your yard

## Assess challenges:

- **Climate**
  - Long, hot, humid summers
  - Erratic winters
- **Site specific**
  - Flooding issues
  - Salt spray
  - Deer browsing
  - Reflected heat



# Oh, Deer!

## Two Groups of Plants:

- **Plants deer love** – will eat over everything else, often killing the plants
- **Plants deer eat** – not their favorites, but will do if they are hungry. Deer occasionally prune these plants but don't usually kill them





# Selecting Plants that will thrive in your yard

- **Analyze growing conditions!**
  - Sun: morning, afternoon or all day?
  - Drainage: Well drained, poorly drained?
- **How much space is available?**
  - Vertically and horizontally



Need Asclepias?  
Which works for  
your site - Swamp  
Milkweed or  
Butterflyweed?

**Select plants adapted to growing conditions!**

# Selecting Plants that will thrive in your yard

## Consider plant characteristics:

- **Growth habit**
  - Spreading
  - Clumping
  - Self-seeding
- **Bloom time**
  - Assess dearth times
- **Aesthetic features:** Color, leaf texture



Mexican petunia is a vigorous spreader!



# Help Plants Establish and Thrive

- Prepare a planting bed:
  - Alleviate soil compaction
  - Incorporate organic matter (compost)
- Water through first growing season
- Mulch, but not too deep!
- If needed, use slow release fertilizers



# Recommended Perennials for Southeast NC

- Adapted to climate and typical landscape conditions
- Well behaved, reliable
- Tough, low care
- Support pollinators
- Commercially available
- Many are native to SE USA





# Spring

- Early spring bloomers are especially critical for early emerging bees
- Fall planted bulbs are among earliest perennials to bloom
- **Most reliable that support pollinators:**
  - Tommies, *Crocus tommasinianus*
  - Star flower, *Iphieon*, 'Jesse' is pictured
- May be short-lived: Alliums, Grape hyacinths





# Pollinator Habitat

This area has been planted with a range of flowering native plants to provide high quality habitat for native bees and other pollinators.

To learn how you can create good habitat for pollinators, please visit [www.xerces.org](http://www.xerces.org)



## Spring weeds are provide valuable early forage habitat!

### Henbit



### Dandelion



### Clover





# Green and Gold

*Chrysogonum virginianum*

- Native
- Light to part shade/dappled sun,
- Moist or well drained soil
- 1' x 2'
- Evergreen foliage
- Often blooms March – June
- Can cut in back early summer



# Eastern Columbine

*Aquilegia canadensis*

- Blooms March - May
- Part sun or shade, well drained soil
- 12" – 24" tall in bloom
- Attracts butterflies and hummingbirds
- Often short-lived but will naturalize in the garden by self seeding





# Bluestar

*Amsonia  
tabernaemontana*

- Native
- Tough, long lived clumping perennial
- Pale blue flowers in spring loved by bees
- 2-3' tall and wide
- Glossy green foliage, yellow in the fall
- Sun to part shade, wet to well drained soil





# Arkansas Blue Star

*Amsonia hubrichtii*

- 3' x 4'
- Sun, drought tolerant
- Long lived
- Yellow autumn color
- Attractive, ferny foliage all season
- Pollinators love it, deer don't!





# False Indigo

*Baptisia* - hybrids and species

- Eastern US natives
- Many varieties – blue, purple, yellow, white flowers
- 3' - 4' x 2' - 3'
- Sun to light shade
- Bloom late April – May
- Bee favorite!
- Clumping, long lived
- Dead head to limit self seeding





# White False Indigo, *Baptisia alba*





# Pollinator Friendly Flowers: Summer

## Honeybees love herbs!

- **Annual:** basil, parsley, dill, cilantro
- **Perennial:** rosemary, chives, oregano, thyme, sage, Texas tarragon/mint marigold



**Catmint, *Nepeta x faassenii***

Drought tolerant, summer flowering perennial;  
silver, aromatic leaves, 2-3' tall and wide



# Coreopsis, Tickseed

- Several species native to NC
- Sun lovers
- Threadleaf Coreopsis
  - *C. verticillata*
  - Long lived
  - Summer blooming
  - Drought tolerant
  - ‘Zagreb’ – 2’ x 2’





## Agastache x 'Blue Fortune'

- Long lived hybrid of anise hyssop, *Agastache foeniculum*
- 3'-4' tall, 2'-3' wide
- Sun, well drained soil
- Drought tolerant
- Blooms early-mid summer
- A bee favorite!



# Orange Coneflower

*Rudbeckia fulgida*

- Aka “Black-eye Susan”
- 3’ tall
- Sun, moist to average soil
- Low mat of semi-evergreen foliage in winter
- Leave seed heads till winter for birds
- Cultivar: ‘Goldstrum’ most common
- Deer love it!





# Purple Coneflower

*Echinacea purpurea*

- Many named varieties available!
- Sun-part shade
- Well-drained, moist soil
- 2' – 4' tall
- Leave seed heads for birds
- Can be short lived, may self-seed







**'Public Domain'**



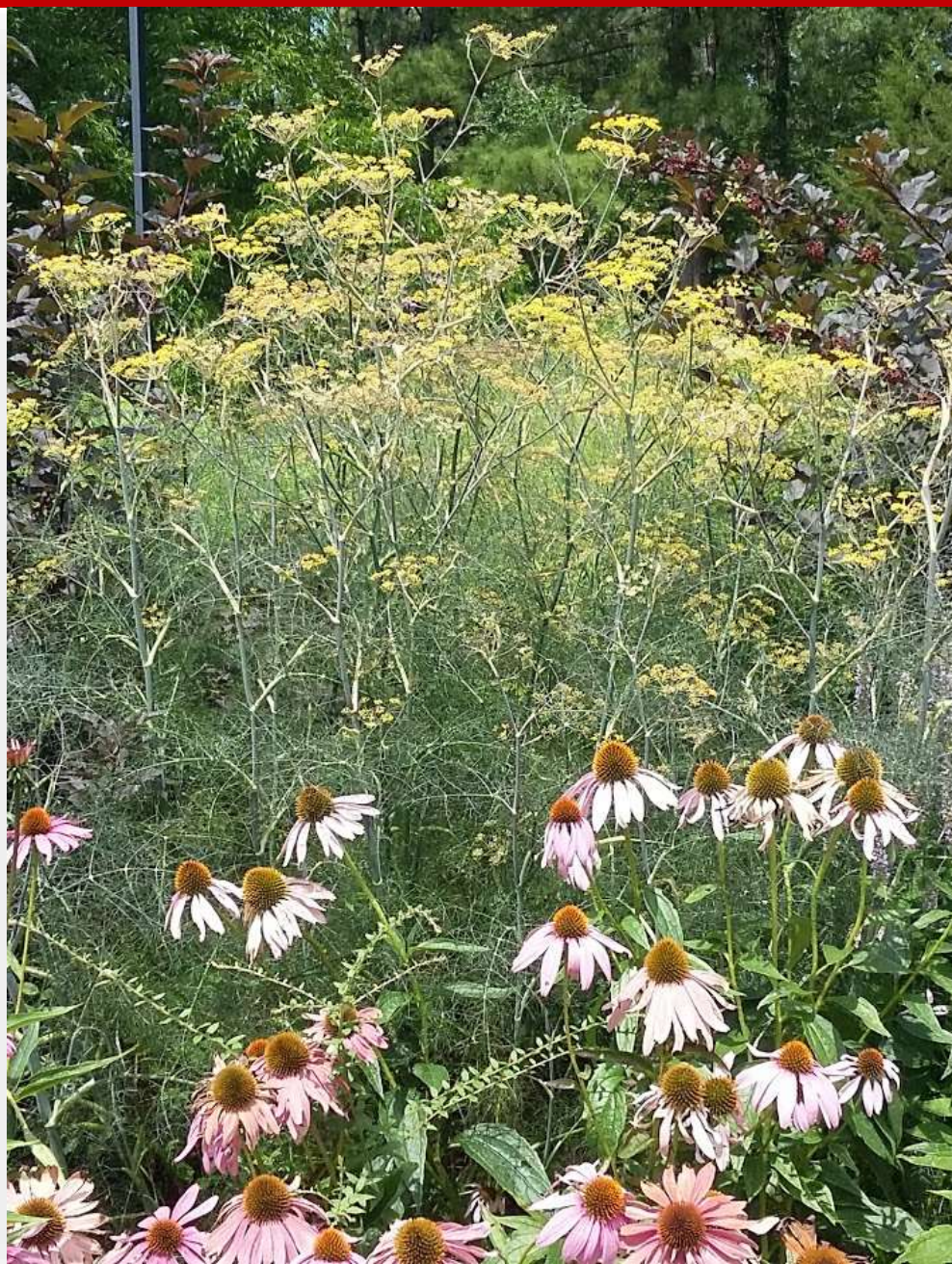
**Smooth Coneflower,  
*Echinacea laevigata***



# Bronze Fennel

*Foeniculum vulgare*

- Sun, well drained or moist soil
- 4-5' x 3-4'
- Lacy foliage, new growth is bronze
- May be short-lived
- Related to bulb fennel, dill, parsley, carrots
- Attracts beneficial insects + pollinators





# Larval host for black swallowtails





# Color Guard Yucca

*Yucca filamentosa*

'Color Guard'

- Native
- Evergreen
- Sun – part shade
- 2' x 2', summer flower spikes to 5'
- Broken roots regenerate new plants
- Very drought tolerant









# Butterfly Weed

*Asclepias tuberosa*

- Native
- Orange flowers attract many pollinators
- Sun to part shade
- Well drained soil
- Drought tolerant
- Late to emerge in spring





**Support Monarchs –  
Plant Asclepias!**





Caterpillars may defoliate the plant, but they will grow back . . .



# Swamp Milkweed

*Asclepias incarnata*

- Native
- 3' tall and wide
- Spring/early summer flowers
- Sun to part shade
- Moisture and flood tolerant
- Monarchs! Attracts many pollinators





# Beebalm

*Monarda fistulosa*,  
*M. didyma*, hybrids and  
cultivars

- Bees love it!
- Moist soil, sun-part shade
- 2'-4'
- Some are vigorous spreaders!
- Seek mildew resistant varieties:
  - Claire Grace
  - Dark Ponticum
  - Violet Queen





# Grand Marshall Mondarda

- New, dwarf variety, spreads less vigorously
- One of better dwarf performers in [Mt. Cuba monarda trial](#)

Other trials studied  
Baptisia, Coreopsis,  
Phlox and Echinacea

[https://mtcubacenter.org/  
research/trial-garden](https://mtcubacenter.org/research/trial-garden)





# Liatris

## *Liatris spicata*

- Native
- Sun, well drained-moist soil
- 2'-4', Kobold is dwarf cultivar
- Nice in mass
- May need staking in rich soil
- Flower spikes bloom from top down





## Jeana Phlox

*Phlox paniculata* 'Jeana'

- Native
- 3-4' tall and wide
- Sun to part shade, moist soil
- In research trials, attracted more pollinators than other Phlox varieties
- Deer favorite





# Mountain Mints

## *Pycnanthemum* species

- 12+ species native to NC
- Bloom mid-late summer
- Sun to light shade
- Moist soil
- 3' tall and wide
- **The best pollinator plants!**
- Some are vigorous spreaders

*Pycnanthemum  
tenuifolium*





# Narrow Leaf Mountain Mint

*P. tenuifolium*





# Clustered Mountain Mint

*P. muticum*





# *Pycnanthemum loomisii*



Similar to hoary mountain mint,  
*P. incana*, but not rhizomatous



# Seashore Mallow

*Kosteletskyia virginica*

- Native to coastal marshes
- 5'-7' tall
- Sun – part shade, moist to wet soil
- Tolerates salt spray and flooding
- Deer resistant





# Joe Pye Weed

*Eutrochium dubium*

- Native
- Sun to light shade, wet to moist soil
- 4'-5' x 3'-4'
- 'Little Joe' to 4'
- Great butterfly nectar source!
- *E. fistulosum* is much taller, more common in piedmont





# Ironweed

*Vernonia  
novaboracensis*

- Native
- 5' – 8' in flower
- Sun to light shade, wet to moist or well drained soil
- Deer resistant
- Great for natural areas and pond's edge – spreads!





*Vernonia  
lettermanii*  
'Iron Butterfly'

- 3' tall, not rhizomatous
- Narrow leaves

*Vernonia  
angustifolia*,  
Sandhills Ironweed,  
is similar – both are  
drought tolerant





## Pollinator Friendly Flowers: Fall

Fall bloomers bolster food stores for overwintering bumble bee queens and honey bee colonies

Late blooming goldenrods are an important food source for bumble bee queens



# Rough Stemmed Goldenrod

*Solidago rugosa*

- cultivar 'Fireworks'
- Grows 3'-4' high and wide
- Sun to part shade, moist or well drained soil
- Attracts butterflies and many other pollinators





# Mexican Bush Sage

*Salvia leucantha*

- 4-5' x 5-6'
- 'Santa Barbara' grows 2-3' tall
- Sun
- Well drained soil, drought tolerant
- Deer resistant





# Texas Sage

*Salvia greggii*

- Sun to light shade
- Well drained soil, drought tolerant
- 2'-3' x 2'-4'
- Can bloom spring-fall
- Many varieties and colors – red, coral, pink, white, peach, purple
- Woody stems – don't cut back too hard in winter





# Calico Aster

*Symphyotrichum  
lateriflorum*

- Native
- Sun to light shade, moist to wet soil
- Tolerates flooding
- 4' tall and wide, vase-shaped/arching
- 'Lady in Black' – dark leaves





# Aromatic Aster

*Symphyotrichum  
oblongifolium*

- Native
- Sun, well drained soil
- Drought tolerant
- Late blooming –  
Oct/Nov
- ‘October Skies’, 2’ x 3’
- ‘Raydon’s Favorite’,  
3’ x 4’





# Switch Grass

*Panicum virgatum*

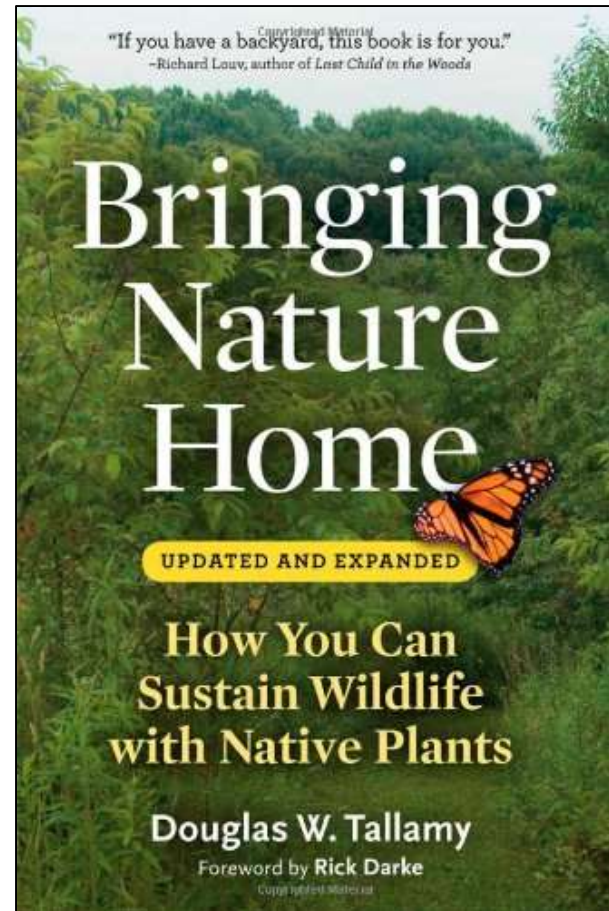
- Several cultivars, 3' - 8' tall
- Moist or dry soils
- Sun to light shade
- Stands up well through winter, birds enjoy seeds
- Cut back by late Feb.



**'Northwind'**  
**5' x 4'**

**“A plant that has  
fed nothing has  
not done its job”**

–D. Tallamy,  
*Bringing Nature  
Home*







## Home

### Featured Plants:


*Callicarpa americana*  
American Beautyberry  
Beautyberry 

*Echinacea purpurea*  
Purple Coneflower 

*Gelsemium sempervirens*  
Carolina Jasmine  
Carolina Jessamine  
Yellow Jessamine 

*Pyrus pyrifolia* 'Shinseiki'  
Chinese Sand Pear  
New Century Asian Pear  
Shinseiki Asian Pear 

*Vaccinium corymbosum*  
Highbush Blueberry 

*Vernonia noveboracensis*  
Ironweed  
New York Ironweed  
Tall Ironweed 

### Quick Plant Lists

Show Stopper Plants

NC State Introduction

The North Carolina Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox contains detailed descriptions and photographs of 3,231 plants that grow in and around North Carolina.

## Here are some tips to get you started

Search by scientific or common name:

Use [Find a Plant](#) to select the perfect plant for a specific location.

Use [Identify a Plant](#) to determine the name of a plant based on leaf and flower characteristics.



## Looking for help?

Have a look at the [Help](#) page to get tips on using the Plant Toolbox, and be sure to check the [Glossary](#) for plant identification terms.



The NC State Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox is based on evaluation of plant databases around the world, surveys of Extension agents, Extension Master Gardener volunteers (EMGVs) and plant database users, and focus groups. Based on themes gathered from this data we have created an innovative tool for gardeners, EMGVs, extension staff, landscape professionals, university staff, and students. The primary goal of the plant database is to help consumers select plants that will bring them joy, provide a valuable function in their landscape, and thrive where planted. Users are encouraged to consider year-round functionality and potential disease and insect problems as part of their selection process.

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- Plant Disease and Insect Clinic

## Additional Partners

- NC's Champion Big Tree Database
- NC Forest Service
- Southern Region IPM Center

## NC State Extension Gardener Sites

- Portal
- Handbook
- Online Classes



# *Acer rubrum*

## Common Name(s): Red Maple

### Phonetic Spelling

AY-ser ROO-brum

### Description

Red Maple is a deciduous tree that may grow 40 to 120 feet tall but is usually less than 40 feet. It grows faster than Norway and sugar maples, but slower than silver maple. The leaves are opposite, with 3-5 palmate lobes and toothed margins on long red stems. The red maple has a slightly smaller leaf than most other species of maples. Its leaves' most distinctive feature is a rough, saw-like edge. If the leaf margin, or edge, of your maple's leaves appear serrated, it is probably a red maple. The bark of young trees is smooth, silvery-gray becoming scaly and dark with age. Small, red flowers in clusters mature in late-winter and are one of the first trees to flower in early spring. During spring, light brown or red-winged samaras mature. In the fall the leaves turn orange-red fall through the brilliance of this color can vary among individual trees.

This tree is the best choice for a soft maple. It makes an excellent, lawn, park, or street tree. It has some tolerance to air pollution and transplants well when young.

### Seasons of Interest:

**Leaves:** Fall; **Bloom:** Winter/Early Spring; **Fruit/Seed/Nut:** Spring

**Insects, Diseases, or Other Plant Problems:** Canker, fungal leaf spot and root rots may also occur. Wind and ice can break branches. This tree has a shallow, flattened root system that may buckle nearby sidewalks or driveways if planted too close.

### Cultivars:

### Tags:

#bees #native #red #deciduous #fall color #large shade tree #yellow #birds #pollinators #specimen #wildlife plant #larval food #nectar plant #bsc #host #wet sites #cpp #low flammability #fire resistant



Trunk  
Amanda Munoz  
CC BY - 2.0



Whole tree  
Janetandphil  
CC BY-NC-ND - 2.0



Female flowers  
Wendy Cutler  
CC BY - 2.0



Gloomy scale on *Acer rubrum*  
Matt Bertone





# Learn Plant ID Online

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**NC STATE**

Extension Gardener

**More Information?**

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**LONGWOOD  
GARDENS**

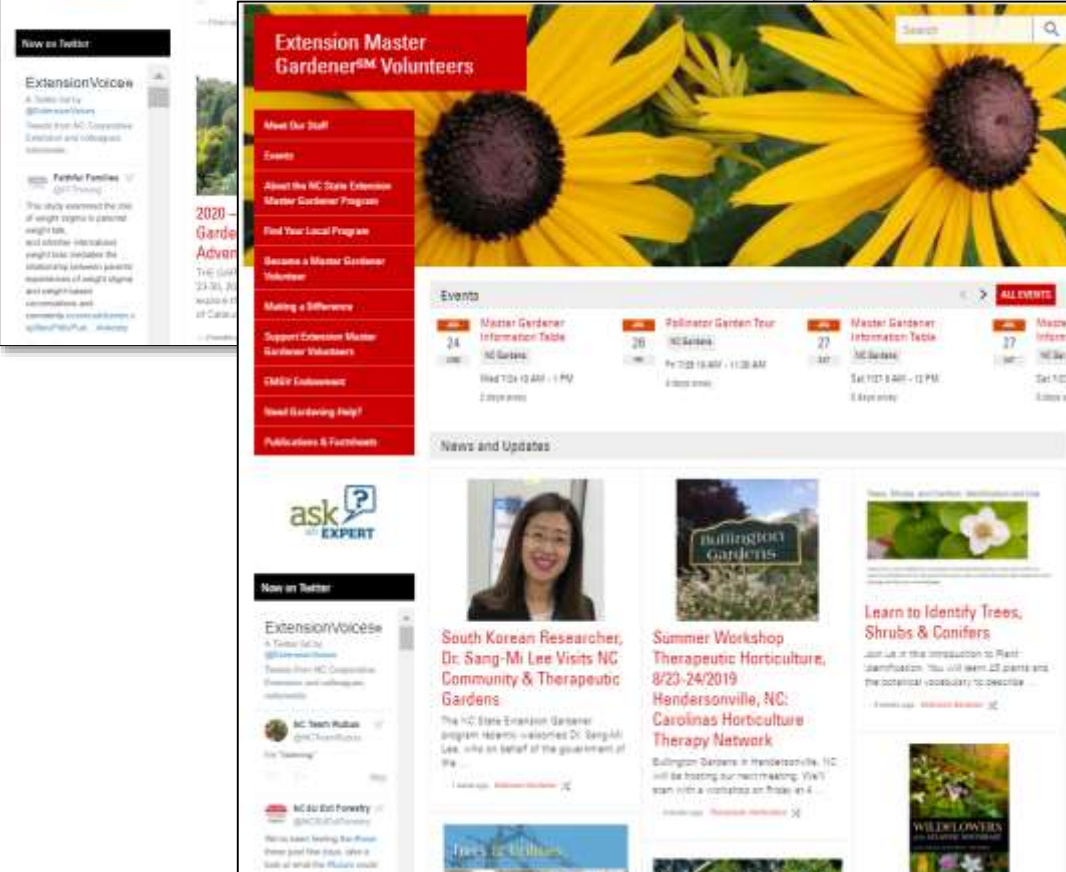
# Web Portals: Consumer Horticulture



- EMGV.ces.ncsu.edu
- Extension Gardener.ces.ncsu.edu

Also:

- Community Gardens
- Therapeutic Horticulture





# Extension Gardener Newsletter

- 4 issues/year
- Include statewide and regional news
- Available online

**NC STATE**

## Extension Gardener

SUMMER 2015  
Special Issue: Native Plants

**PIEDMONT NEWS**

- Choosing the right native
- Planting edibles for insects
- Emerald ash borer
- Disease-resistant natives

**STATE NEWS**

- Native plants
- Bird-friendly native plants
- "Ven" blackberry
- Drought-tolerant natives

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## Special Issue: Native Plants

Welcome to a special issue of *Extension Gardener*. All articles in this issue focus on native plants and how gardeners across North Carolina can incorporate more natives into their landscapes. Why did we decide to focus this issue on natives? To start with, you asked for it. In our 2014 survey, readers indicated native plants were the top issue they wished to learn more about in 2015. Equally important, we feel all gardeners should be aware of the critical need to increase the use of native plants in landscapes.

The key to understanding why increasing the use of natives in our gardens is so important lies in recognizing the essential role native plants play in supporting biodiversity and the ecosystem services needed to sustain our environment. Ecosystem services are the essential benefits we receive from nature. These include pollination of crops and plants by bees and other pollinators, purification of water as it filters through plant roots and soil, and the moderating effect forests have on our climate. When native plants are removed from an area, the biodiversity of that area, and the ecosystem services that result from it, are diminished. Planting locally native species empowers gardeners to care for nature and preserve biodiversity.

So, what exactly are native plants? They are those species that evolved naturally in a region without human intervention. Red maple (*Acer rubrum*), flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*), and butterfly weed (*Aclepias tuberosa*) are examples of the more than 3,500 species of plants native to North Carolina. These plants have developed and adapted to local soil and climate conditions over thousands of years. Because they have coevolved with pollinators, insects, birds, mammals, and other wildlife, native plants are vital parts of our local ecosystems and are necessary for the survival of many species that occur in North Carolina.

When defining native plants for landscaping, it is essential to define the region to which you refer. North Carolina has three distinct regions: (1) the coastal plain and sandhills, which extends from the Atlantic coast inland to the Fall Line; (2) the piedmont, which encompasses the center of the state; and (3) the foothills and mountains that make up the western part of our state. When adding natives to your landscape, benefits such as tolerance of local conditions and value to wildlife will be strongest if you select plants native to your region.

The next time you consider adding new plants to your landscape, keep this in mind: Any



Coral honeysuckle and hummingbird  
©www.garden55.com/garden55photo.com



Luna moth  
©Tore Colverson, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org



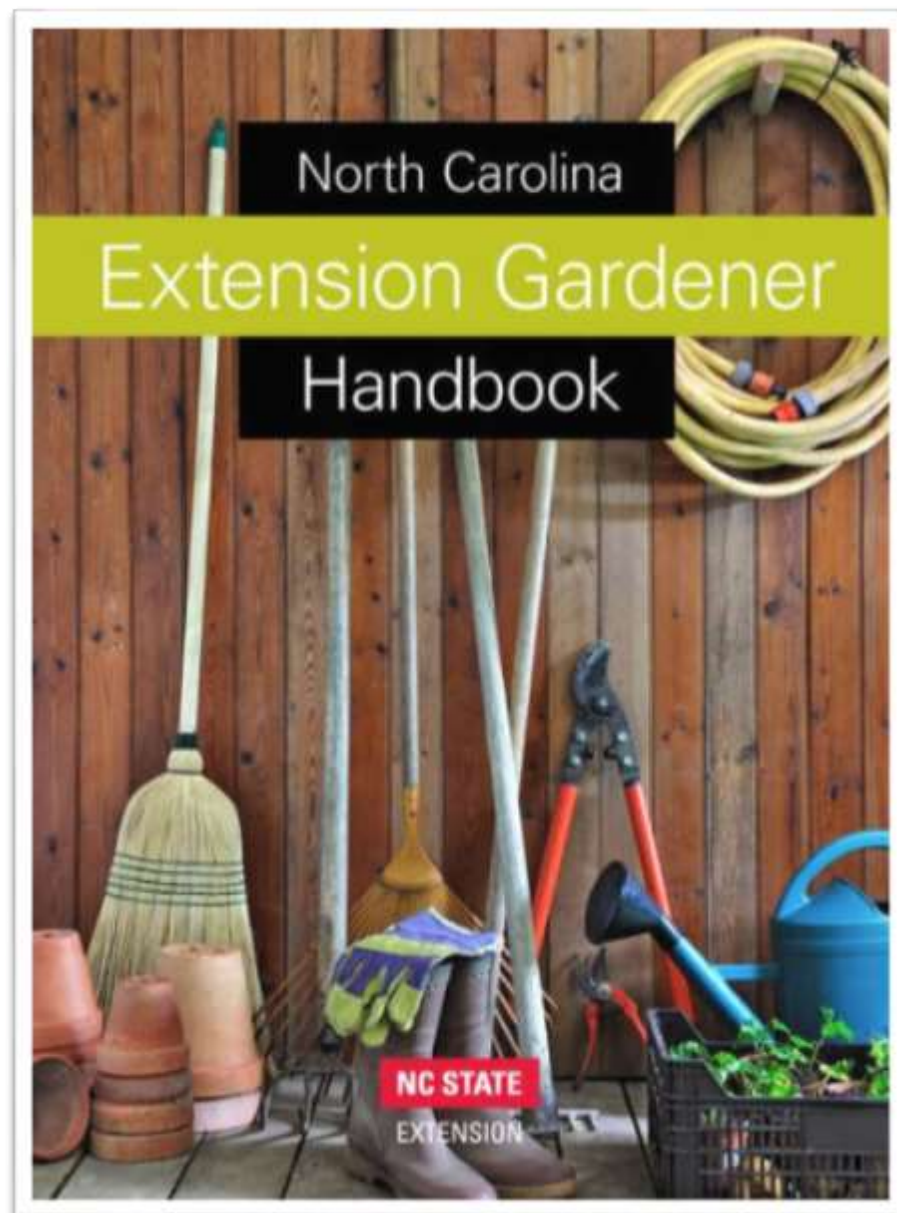
Joe-pye weed and swallowtail butterfly ©CharlotteGee

Continued on back page

<http://extensiongardener.ces.ncsu.edu>

# Extension Gardener Handbook

- Order online: [go.ncsu.edu/gardener-handbook](http://go.ncsu.edu/gardener-handbook)
- Or call 800-848-6224
- \$60, hard cover
- Beautifully formatted with many useful tables and full-color images
- Content is available free online: [go.ncsu.edu/eg-handbook](http://go.ncsu.edu/eg-handbook)





# N.C. Cooperative Extension, Craven County Center

<https://craven.ces.ncsu.edu>

- 300 Industrial Dr, New Bern, NC 28562
- 252-633-1477
- Master Gardener volunteers lead 3<sup>rd</sup> Sat. garden tour, plant sale, and workshop!
- Annual bulb sale:  
<https://www.cravenmastergardener.org>



**Questions?**



Learn more:

**<http://go.ncsu.edu/natives>**