

Protecting Pollinators

Can you imagine life without flowers, avocados and coffee?!

These crops are dependent on pollinators for reproduction, and pesticides kill these essential pollinators. So let's talk about mosquito control without using pesticides.

- Except in the case of extreme infestation, avoid using broad spectrum pesticides like those used by commercial mosquito control companies. Yes, the pesticides kill the mosquitos, but more importantly they are toxic to all living creatures that coexist in your yard and garden, including the pollinators, your children and pets.
- Plant natural repellents: lemon balm, catnip, rosemary and citronella.
- Eliminate standing water like bird baths (empty frequently) and clogged gutters.
- If you still struggle with mosquito infestation, contact one of the "Green and Clean" lawn companies listed on the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation: [Green & Clean Initiative](#)

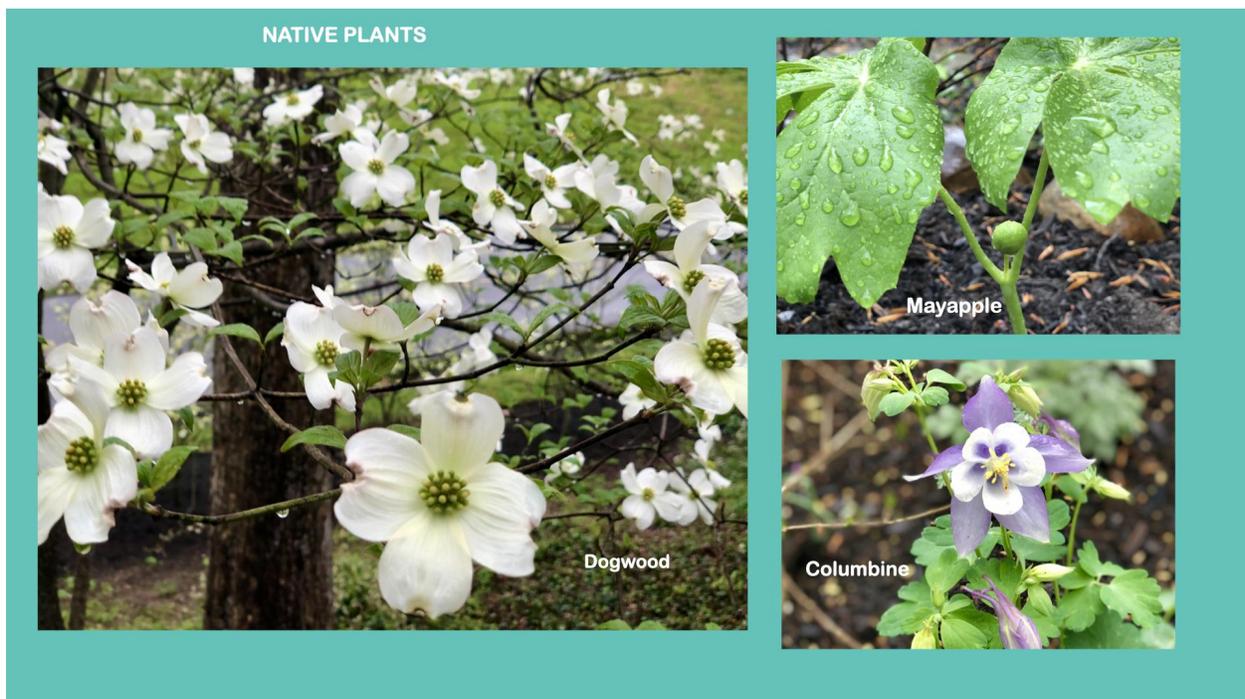
Fun Fact: bats are the primary pollinators of the agave plant. Do you know what potent potable comes from agave? Tequila!



Planting Native Species

What is a native plant and why are native plants important?

- A native plant is a part of the balance of nature that has developed over hundreds or thousands of years in a particular region or ecosystem.
- Local native plants support more wildlife species than non-native plants.
- Native plants host specific insect species and are essential for pollinators.
- Local native plants are adapted to local temperature and rainfall fluctuations.
- Once established, they require less watering and fertilizing, which saves natural resources, time, and money.
- (Source: [Plant RVA Natives](#))



Sue Thompson and Abbie Wharton, fellow TGC members and professional landscape designers, highly recommend using Virginia native plants.

"We believe strongly that native plants are essential to the health of our landscapes through their resilience and adaptability. Native plants provide

- ❑ *safe habitat,*
- ❑ *erosion control,*

- ❑ *food for native insects (who in turn feed our native bird populations),*
- ❑ *bounteous food for pollinators,*
- ❑ *arching tree canopies; and*
- ❑ *exquisite natural beauty.*

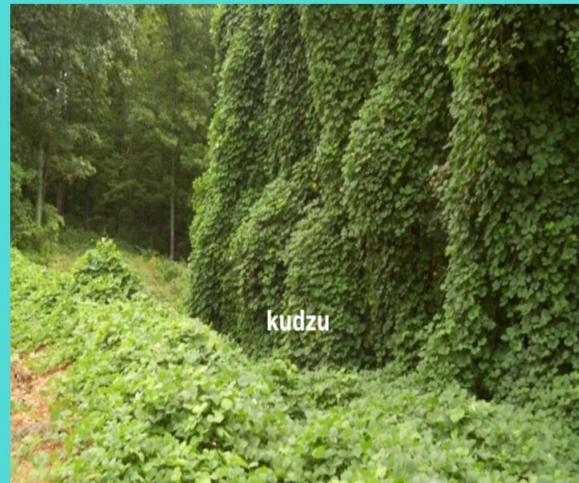
Native plants are a key to the maintenance of genetic diversity in the plant kingdom, and their genetic diversity through reproduction from seed, allows them to respond to changing climate conditions. From spring ephemerals such as Virginia Bluebells to the extraordinary magnificence of our great North American trees, native plants belong not just in natural areas but in the designed landscape.”

Sue and Abbie compiled a [list](#) for us of some of their favorite Virginia native plants. Please consider using them in your own garden.



What is an invasive plant and why are invasives a problem?

An *invasive species* is defined as a species that is alien to the ecosystem under consideration and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. Invasives don't have natural enemies and grow like weeds, robbing the natives of nutrients and choking them out of their natural habitat. Without natives we have to use more pesticides which pollute our waterways and endanger the pollinators.



Common invasive plants



For a complete list of invasives in Virginia, click [here](#)

According to the [Invasive Plant Atlas](#):

Invasive plant species displace and alter native plant communities, impede forest regeneration and natural succession, change soil chemistry, alter hydrologic conditions, alter fire regimes, cause genetic changes in native plant relatives through hybridization and some serve as agents for the transmission of harmful plant pathogens.

The Invasive Plant Atlas is a great resource if you want to look up any invasive plants. It is a collaborative project between the National Park Service, the University of Georgia Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health, the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. The purpose of the Atlas is to assist users with identification, early detection, prevention, and management of invasive plants.