

Why Plant Native Plants?

They Provide Food for Wildlife

Plants evolve chemical defenses to protect themselves from leaf-eating insects. When insects co-evolve with the plants in a region, they adapt resistances to these chemicals. In contrast, local insects are not adapted to the chemicals in non-native plants and cannot eat them. Less food for insects means less food for birds, bats, and other wildlife.



They Provide Structure for Wildlife

Non-native pasture grasses provide insufficient cover for quail and other grassland birds, especially over the winter. In contrast, native grasses and wildflowers provide food and cover year-round.



They Are Easier to Maintain

Native species are adapted to local soils, weather, and wildlife. They require less fertilizer, water, and care, which saves money and resources, and reduces pollution.



They Don't Invade the Landscape

Imported ornamental plants may escape and become invasive pests (e.g., Burning Bush, Chinese Privet, and Oriental Bittersweet). They also have a history of carrying unwelcome insects and pathogens, such as the chestnut blight, hemlock wooly adelgid, and Japanese beetle. Introductions are still occurring and they can be prevented by purchasing native plants.



The More Local the Better

When possible, buy plants that are native to your county and plants that have local genetics (grown from seeds collected in your region). By using local plants on your property, you can help to restore native plant communities in degraded areas. Visit www.vaplantatlas.org to see which species are native to your county. It is acceptable to use plants that aren't native to your county right around the house, but it's especially important to use local species, and ideally plants with local genetics, in plantings farther away from the house.



About the Clifton Institute

The Clifton Institute is a non-profit organization located on a 900-acre property near Warrenton, VA. Our mission is to inspire a deeper understanding and appreciation of nature, to study the ecology of our region, to restore habitat, and to conserve native biodiversity. For more information about land management, contact Land Management Outreach Associate Marie Norwood at mnorwood@cliftoninstitute.org or 781.608.5154. For more information about the Clifton Institute, visit cliftoninstitute.org.



Photos from top to bottom:
Tall Coreopsis, Little Bluestem (Drew Avery), Sweet Pepperbush (John Brandauer), American Bluehearts, Rose-pink.