

Whether you manage a small back yard, a 10-acre homestead or a 500-acre farm, it's possible to walk more lightly on the land by allowing natural communities of wild plants and wildlife to thrive here and there.

Patches, corners and strips of natural diversity - a meadow let go, a wet field bottom, a part of a yard - can achieve a wonderfully rich succession of habitat. As native plants grow up, or are encouraged by deliberate planting, the native songbirds, insects and mammals will return to enjoy the food, shelter and nesting places amid the natural tangle.

Hedgerows and unmowed edges are wildlife's highways as well as its homes and supermarkets. Natural areas provide vital travel corridors for birds, insects, toads and others amid the expanses of empty green lawn that act as barriers to animal movement and native plant dispersal.

These natural places, spared the obliterating force of mowers and



weedeaters, can create islands of wild beauty on your land. Plan these "let-go" places with the same care that you give your more manicured areas and you'll find them as rewarding as your mowed lawn and weeded garden. Perhaps more so, as an uncut strip of

a lawn or field can offer a natural succession of bloom from spring dogwoods to fall asters.

As the 21st century dawns, people cannot rely solely on public lands to safeguard the planet's natural diversity of life. Private landowners who recognize the responsibility and opportunity that their ownership gives them can help ensure the survival of the world's wild plants and wildlife. Together, many individual private stewards of the planet can achieve much more than any public agency or government policy.

So look out on your personal landscape. What do you see? A perfect expanse of green grass, achieved through hours of labor with weedeater and gas-guzzling lawnmower? A manicured landscape that depends entirely

on heavy applications of fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides and water during our hot dry summer? Or a more casual combination of lawn, taller growth and hedgerow, home to briar and black-eyed Susan, butterflies and goldfinches, rabbits and turtles, frogs and fireflies?

Just a little less tidiness can help restore the natural beauty and ecological health of our countryside. The choice is yours.

Additional Sources of Information

For an in depth discussion of issues raised in this pamphlet, read *Noah's Garden: Restoring the Ecology of Our Own Back Yards* by Sara Stein from Houghton Mifflin Co. and *Stalking the Wild Amaranth: Gardening in the Age of Extinction* by Janet Marinelli from Henry Holt and Co.

Identification of herbaceous plants: *Newcomb's Wildflower Guide* or *Wildflowers* (Peterson Field Guide Series). Identification of woody plants: *Eastern Trees* (Peterson Field Guide Series) or *Trees: Revised and Updated* (Golden Guides from St. Martin's Press).

Information on natural landscaping: Virginia Natural Heritage Program (Department of Conservation and Recreation) publishes "Native Plants for Conservation and Restoration" [dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/nativeplants.shtml]; a print copy can be ordered from the website or by calling (804) 786-7951. Information on invasive plants: nps.gov/plants/alien. Information on natural habitats: National Wildlife Federation [nwf.org/habitats], Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries [dgif.state.va.us/habitat] and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service [fws.gov/habitat].

Information about birds: Cornell Lab of Ornithology [birds.cornell.edu]. Butterfly identification and information: [butterfliesandmoths.org]. Information on pollinating insects: *Insects* (Peterson Field Guide Series) and [xerces.org].

The Virginia Native Plant Society

Founded in 1982, the VNPS is a not-for-profit organization of individuals who share an interest in Virginia's wild plants and habitats and a concern for their protection. Its work is carried out by volunteers and is supported by membership dues and contributions. For more information:

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Hedgerows and Other Corners of Natural Diversity in Our Countryside and Gardens



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The plants listed below are native species that grow naturally in Virginia and much of the eastern United States.

The chart is keyed as follows: *Location* - **H** - Hedgerow, woodland edge or thicket, **P** - Pond edge, **O** - Open meadow, **G** - Garden. *Special merits for the hedgerow community* - **c** - Cover source and nesting sites, **f** - Special food value, **w** - Important winter food source, **b** - Attracts butterflies, **h** - Attracts hummingbirds, *spp.* - Multiple species.



Trees

Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) **G, c, f**
Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*) **H, G, c, f**
Black Walnut (*Juglans nigra*) **H, f, w**
Box Elder (*Acer negundo*) **H, P, c, f**
Cherry (*Prunus spp.*) **H, G, f, b**
Crabapple (*Malus coronaria*) **H, G, c, f**
Dogwood (*Cornus spp.*) **H, G, c, f, w**
Hackberry (*Celtis spp.*) **H, G, F, w, b**
Hawthorn (*Crataegus spp.*) **H, G, c, f**
Hazelnut (*Corylus americana*) **H, c, f**
Holly (*Ilex opaca*) **H, G, c, f, w**
Maple (*Acer spp.*) **H, G, c, f**
Oak (*Quercus spp.*) **H, G, c, f, w**
Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) **H, f, b**
Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*)
H, G, c, f
Pine, Scrub (*Pinus virginiana*) **H, P, c, f, w**
Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) **H, G, c, f, b**
Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) **H, G, c, f, b**
Serviceberry (*Amelanchier arborea*)
H, G, c, f



Shrubs

Alder (*Alnus serrulata*) **P, c**
Black Haw (*Viburnum prunifolium*) **H, G, c, f**
Blackberry, Raspberry (*Rubus spp.*) **H, O, c**
Bladdernut (*Staphylea trifolia*) **P, G, f**
Blueberry, Deerberry (*Vaccinium spp.*) **H, f**
Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) **P, c, f, b, h**
Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*) **H, G, f**
Huckleberry (*Gaylussacia spp.*) **H, f**
Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) **H, P, G, f, b**
Sumac (*Rhus spp.*) **H, O, f, w**
Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*) **H, P, G, c, w**

Vines

Grape (*Vitis spp.*) **H, f**
Trumpet Vine (*Campsis radicans*) **H, G, c, h**
Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)
H, f

Leave dead trees standing wherever you can. They provide natural nesting cavities, as well as grubs and insects for birds, especially woodpeckers. Snags provide lookout perches.

Many of these species will appear on their own if the habitat is right. You can also plant seeds or buy propagated plants from commercial growers. The Virginia Native Plant Society has a list of native plant nurseries. Write to VNPS for more information.

Herbaceous Plants

Arrowhead (*Sagittaria latifolia*) **P, f**
Aster (*Asteraceae spp.*) **H, O, P, G, f, b**
Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) **H, O, G, b**
Broomsedge (*Andropogon virginicus*) **O, c, w**
Bulrush (*Scirpus spp.*) **P, c, f**
Cattails (*Typha latifolia*) **P, c**
Dogbane (*Apocynum cannabinum*) **H, O, c**
Joe-Pye Weed (*Eupatorium spp.*) **O, P, f**
Goldenrod (*Solidago spp.*) **H, O, P, f**
Jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*) **P, h**
Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)
H, O, c, w
Milkweeds, Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias spp.*)
H, O, P, G, b
Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) **H, f, w**
Pondweed (*Potamogeton spp.*) **P, f**
Ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*) **H, O, f**
Rice Cutgrass (*Leersia oryzoides*) **P, f**
Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*) **P, f, w**
Violet (*Viola spp.*) **H, G, f, b**
Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) **H, O, G, b**

How You Can Create Hedgerows and Preserve Habitat



+ **Identify Possibilities.** Look for fence lines, woodland edges, the corners of a field or garden, wet bottom land, a pond edge or hard-to-mow hillside.

+ **Think Corridors.** How does wildlife move from one place to another? Hedgerows can be vital highways as well as a place for wild creatures to live and find food.

+ **Mow Less.** This saves energy and your time, and helps reduce air and noise pollution. Mow regularly close to houses, but cut lawns farther away from dwellings only every four to six weeks. Mow meadows annually or every two years. Keep road edges cut so that unwary wildlife can see cars in time.

+ **Control Your Weedeater.** Clean ragged edges selectively and leave native plants whenever possible. The livelihood of natural communities is in your hands.

+ **Help Nature Along.** Preserve and plant key native species: these shrubs, vines, trees and wildflowers are ideally suited to our climate and will thrive through the years with much less care from you.

+ **Talk to Your Neighbors.** Spread the word (and this pamphlet). Cooperate on common borders to allow a hedgerow to thrive. Look for adjoining corners that together will create an oasis for wild plants and animals. Explain the many advantages of “managed untidiness.”