

Cape Atlantic Conservation District



Native Plants for
Wildlife Habitat
Improvement in
New Jersey's
Coastal Plain
Region

Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat Improvement in New Jersey's Coastal Plain Region



The use of native plant species at a school, in a park, or around your home can be beneficial in many ways. Wildlife use plants for food and shelter, while you benefit from the beauty these plants and wildlife add to the landscape. The native plants are readily accepted by wildlife but also are adapted to our environmental conditions. They are adapted to our soil conditions, resistant to pests and once established require less maintenance.

This guide provides information for native plant species beneficial to wildlife of the Coastal Plain region of New Jersey. These plants can be used to help establish wildlife habitat areas on your property. The plants are listed in the categories of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants. In addition, environmental parameters for the use of these plants are identified in terms of soil moisture conditions, light preference and plant characteristics. Most of the plants in this guide are readily available from the nurseries and garden centers in this region.

Several factors should be considered when designing your wildlife habitat improvement. The first factor to consider is what kind of habitat you want to create. Certain plants are better suited for a bog or rain garden, while others thrive in an upland forest setting. So match the native plant environmental preferences to the soil moisture conditions of your site. Choosing plants that are well-adapted to your site's soil condition is important to their survival. An investigation of the soil on-site can be conducted first by using your County Soil Survey, and then by doing soil borings or soil pits. For aid in understanding the characteristics of soils, you may contact your Soil Conservation District.

The amount of sunshine or shade that your project area receives will affect the species of trees or shrubs that will survive over the long term. Certain species of trees and shrubs have adapted to living under the canopy of other trees; they are called understory plants. Over the short term too much shade will affect the amount of flowering and ultimately the amount of fruit that a plant can provide for wildlife. Consider shade from existing trees, and shade from buildings. Also plan for shade that will be created when newly planted trees mature.



Another major factor is how much space you have for your wildlife habitat improvement. You can expand the space for your wildlife habitat by layering canopy trees over understory trees over shrubs. This structured diversity will attract more species of wildlife. You should plan for the mature height and spread of a tree or shrub to avoid plants overcrowding. As with any landscape design, you want to design your site to create a terraced appearance, and to expand the habitat opportunities for wildlife by placing shrubs in front of trees and herbaceous plants in front of shrubs.

Native plants will flower various times of the year. You can choose plants that flower in your wildlife habitat area from March to September, attracting larger numbers of butterflies, pollinators and hummingbirds. Since plants flower at different times of the year, they bear fruit at different times of the year. Knowing when a plant will provide fruit will help you to provide wildlife food supply for a longer period during the year. Some plants will hold their berries or seeds that sustain migratory and overwintering species.







Lastly, when creating your landscape plan for your wildlife habitat improvement you will want to choose plants that are readily available. Try to purchase locally grow plants - they are adapted to local weather and site conditions of the coastal plain region. When purchasing your plants, check the scientific name of the plant to ensure that you are purchasing a native species and not a non-native cultivar.



This guides contains a list of plants that are adapted to the region, and are more pest tolerant, disease resistant and more drought tolerant than non-indigenous plants. It is not a complete list of the native plant species of New Jersey, but rather a list of those that may be best suited to help establish a wildlife habitat on your property.

The information in this guide has been collected from various local, state, and federal government agencies, as well as private organizations. All photographs are from the US Fish & Wildlife Service, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Cape Atlantic Conservation District.

Trees

	Name	Soil Moisture Conditions	Light	Height	Spread	Flower	Fruit	Fall Foliage
	USDA NRCS Atlantic White Cedar (Chamaecyparis thyoides)	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☐	60' - 80'	20' - 30'	March - April greenish-brown	bluish, cone-like maturing in fall	evergreen
	USDA NRCS Eastern Red Cedar (Juniperus virginiana)	<i>Dry to Moist</i>	☉	40' - 50'	10' - 20'	March - April red to purple	July - March green to blue cone-like	evergreen
	CACD American Holly* (Ilex opaca)	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☐ ☐	15' - 50'	18' - 40'	May - June small white	Oct - March red berry	evergreen
	CACD Eastern White Pine (Pinus strobus)	<i>Dry to Moist</i>	☉	75' - 100'	50' - 75'	May yellow	August - Oct light brown cone	evergreen
	USDA NRCS Pitch Pine (Pinus rigida)	<i>Dry to Wet</i>	☉	50' - 60'	40' - 50'	May small red to purple	brown cone maturing in fall	evergreen
	USDA NRCS Virginia Pine (Pinus virginiana)	<i>Dry to Moist</i>	☉	30' - 40'	20' - 30'	April yellow	reddish-brown cone maturing in two years in Oct	evergreen

*understory species

Trees



USDA NRCS

Black Gum
(*Nyssa sylvatica*)

Dry to Wet



30' - 75'

20' - 50'

April - June
greenish-white

Sept - Oct
blue-black fleshy
fruit

red



USDA NRCS

Flowering Dogwood*
(*Cornus florida*)

Dry to Moist



20' - 50'

20' - 50'

April - May
large white

Sept - Dec
red to orange
berry

scarlet red



USDA NRCS

Gray Birch
(*Betula populifolia*)

Dry to Moist



20' - 40'

15' - 30'

April - May
green to brown
catkin

Sept - Oct
small winged
nutlet

yellow



USDA NRCS

Persimmon
(*Diospyros virginiana*)

Dry to Wet



30' - 60'

20' - 30'

May - June
small yellow

Sept - Nov
yellowish to pale
orange large
berry

yellow-green
or reddish
purple



USDA NRCS

Red Maple
(*Acer rubrum*)

Dry to Wet



40' - 75'

25' - 50'

March
yellow tinted to
bright red

April
red wing-shaped
samara

orange to red



USDA NRCS

Sassafras
(*Sassafras albidum*)

Dry to Moist



20' - 50'

20' - 30'

April
yellow green

Sept - Oct
dark blue
berry-like

yellow to
crimson



USDA NRCS

**Shadbush,
Serviceberry***
(*Amelanchier
canadensis*)

Moist to Wet



35' - 50'

35' - 50'

April - May
small white

June - July
red to purple

orange to red



US F&WS

Sweetbay Magnolia*
(*Magnolia virginiana*)

Moist to Wet



12' - 30'

12' - 30'






May - July
white to cream

Sept - Oct
red berry

yellow
(semi-
evergreen)

*understory species

Trees

	Name	Soil Moisture Conditions	Light	Height	Spread	Flower	Fruit	Fall Foliage
	Chestnut Oak (<i>Quercus prinus</i>)	<i>Dry</i>	☉ ☀	40' - 80'	40' - 60'	May - June yellowish	Sept - Oct yellow-green acorn	yellow-orange
	Northern Red Oak (<i>Quercus rubra</i>)	<i>Dry to Moist</i>	☉ ☀	70' - 90'	40' - 50'	May light green catkins	October green to brown acorn	red to reddish-brown
	Southern Red Oak (<i>Quercus falcata</i>)	<i>Dry to Moist</i>	☉	60' - 80'	50'	April - May yellowish-green	October orange brown acorn	orange brown
	White Oak (<i>Quercus alba</i>)	<i>Dry to Moist</i>	☉ ☀	80' - 100'	80' - 100'	April - May yellow	October chestnut brown acorn	brown to reddish-brown
	Willow Oak (<i>Quercus phellos</i>)	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☀	60' - 80'	40' - 60'	April - May yellow	Aug - Oct greenish-brown acorn	yellow to orange-red

USDA NRCS

USDA NRCS

USDA NRCS

USDA NRCS

USDA NRCS

Shrubs



US F&WS

Arrowwood Viburnum
(*Viburnum dentatum*)

**Soil Moisture
Conditions**

Dry to Wet

Light



Height

10' - 15'

Spread

6' - 12'

Flower

May - June
white

Fruit

Sept - Nov
blue to black
berry

Fall Foliage

reddish-purple



USDA NRCS

American Cranberrybush
(*Viburnum trilobum*)

Moist



8' - 12'

8' - 12'

early June
white

September
red glossy

red to purple



US F&WS

Cranberry
(*Vaccinium macrocarpon*)

Wet



.5" - 1"

3' - 3'

June - July
white to pink

Sept - Nov
red berry

purple to red



Cape Atlantic
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District

Highbush Blueberry
(*Vaccinium corymbosum*)

Dry to Wet



6' - 12'

6' - 12'

April - June
white

July - Aug
blue berry

red



US F&WS

Lowbush Blueberry
(*Vaccinium angustifolium*)

Dry to Moist



1' - 2'

1' - 2'

May - June
white

July - Aug
blue berry

red



Cape Atlantic
Conservation
District

Inkberry Holly
(*Ilex glabra*)

Dry to Wet



6' - 10'

6' - 10'

May - June
small white

Sept - March
black berry

evergreen



USDA NRCS

Winterberry Holly
(*Ilex verticillata*)

Moist to Wet



6' - 10'

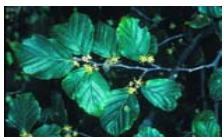
4' - 6'

early June
small white

Oct - Dec
bright red
and glossy

yellow-green
with purple
tinges

Shrubs



	Name	Soil Moisture Conditions	Light	Height	Spread	Flower	Fruit	Fall Foliage
USDA NRCS	Beach Plum (<i>Prunus maritima</i>)	<i>Dry to Moist, Sandy Salt Tolerant</i>	☉	4' - 7'	8' - 10'	April - June white	Aug - Sept purplish-black to red to yellow fleshy	yellow to gold
RCE	Bearberry (<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>)	<i>Dry sandy</i>	☉ ☀	2" - 8"	2' - 6'	April - May white or pinkish	July - March bright red drupe	evergreen
US F&WS	Mountain Laurel (<i>Kalmia latifolia</i>)	<i>Dry to Wet</i>	☉ ☀ ☛	12' - 20'	12' - 20'	May - July white to pink	May - June brown capsules	evergreen
USDA NRCS	Northern Bayberry (<i>Morella pensylvanica</i>)	<i>Dry to Wet Salt Tolerant</i>	☉ ☀	5' - 10'	5' - 10'	March - April small yellow-green	Sept - April waxy white bluish berry	bronze
US F&WS	Silky Dogwood (<i>Cornus amomum</i>)	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☀	6' - 12'	6' - 12'	May - June white	August blue berry	orange-red to purple
US F&WS	Swamp Azalea (<i>Rhododendron viscosum</i>)	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☀	6' - 10'	6' - 12'	May - Aug white to pink	Aug - March brown capsules	yellow-orange to purple
US F&WS	Sweet Pepperbush (<i>Clethra ainifolia</i>)	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☀	5' - 8'	4' - 6'	July - Aug numerous small white	Sept - Feb brown capsules	yellow-green to golden brown
US F&WS	Witch-hazel (<i>Hamamelis virginiana</i>)	<i>Dry to Moist</i>	☀ ☛	15' - 30'	20' - 30'	Sept - Dec small yellow	Oct - Nov tan brown capsules	yellow

Herbaceous Plants & Grasses



USDA NRCS

Bee Balm
(*Monarda didyma*)

**Soil Moisture
Conditions**

Moist to Wet

Light



Plant Size

2' - 5'

Flower

July - Sept
red tufts

Notes

minty aroma



USDA NRCS

Big Bluestem
(*Andropogon gerardii*)

Dry to Moist



2' - 6.5'

June - Sept
red, blue, brown, &
yellow

moderate salt
tolerance



USDA NRCS

Black-eyed Susan
(*Rudbeckia hirta*)

Dry to Moist



1' - 3.5'

June - Oct
yellow to orange with
black eye

most common
American wildflower



USDA NRCS

Blue Lobelia
(*Lobelia siphilitica*)

Moist to Wet



1' - 5'

Aug - Oct
blue to violet
fluffy appearance

flowers crowded on
upper stem



USDA NRCS

Blue Mistflower
(*Conoclinium
coelestinum*)

Dry to Wet



1' - 3.5'

July - Oct
blue to purple

can spread quickly



USDA NRCS

Bluejoint Reedgrass
(*Calamagrostis
canadensis*)

Moist to Wet



1.5' - 5'
0.5'-1' spread

June - Aug
purple/ tan to
blue/green

attracts waterfowl



USDA NRCS

Boneset
(*Eupatorium
perfoliatum*)

Moist to Wet










1' - 5'

July - Oct
white
small, fuzzy clusters

popular herb

Herbaceous Plants & Grasses

	Name	Soil Moisture Conditions	Light	Plant Size	Flower	Notes
	Brachen Fern (<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>)	<i>Dry to Wet</i>	☉ ☾	1.5' - 6'	June - Aug green	reproduction by spores
	Broom Sedge (<i>Andropogon virginicus</i>)	<i>Dry to Wet</i>	☉	1' - 3'	Aug - Nov yellow to reddish brown	not recommended to mix with cool season grasses
	Butterfly Weed (<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>)	<i>Dry to moist</i>	☉ ☾	1' - 3'	May - July yellow to orange	transplant seedlings, not taproot easy to grow from seeds
	Cardinal Flower (<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>)	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☾	2' - 4' 0.5'-1' spread	July - Oct red	long bloom time but must be reseeded
	Cinnamon Fern (<i>Osmunda cinnamomea</i>)	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☾ ●	2' - 5'	March - May reddish brown wooly appearance	produces separate fertile & sterile fronds
	Clematis (<i>Clematis virginiana</i>)	<i>Dry to Moist</i>	☉ ☾ ●	6' - 20' 0.5'-1' spread	July - Sept white small flower	fragrant flowers
	Foxglove Beard Tongue (<i>Penstemon digitalis</i>)	<i>Dry to moist</i>	☉ ☾	2' - 5'	June - Aug white to light purple	tubular flower with a tuff of small hairs along the stamen

USDA NRCS

USDA NRCS

USDA NRCS








USDA NRCS

USDA NRCS

US F&WS

USDA NRCS

Herbaceous Plants & Grasses

	Name	Soil Moisture Conditions	Light	Plant Size	Flower	Notes
	USDA NRCS Fox Sedge (Carex vulpinoidea)	<i>Wet</i>	☉ ☐	0.5' - 3.5'	June - Aug green	high wildlife value
	USDA NRCS Fragrant Waterlily (Nymphaea odorata)	<i>Wet (Emergent)</i>	☉	1' - 4'	June - Sept white to pink floating plant	flowers close at night needs a pond at least 1 foot deep
	USDA NRCS Golden Heather (Hudsonia ericoides)	<i>Dry</i>	☉	4" - 8" 3' spread	May - July yellow	low growing, mat forming plant
	USDA NRCS Jewelweed (Impatiens capensis)	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☐ ☐	3' - 5'	July - Oct yellow to orange	stem juice is a remedy for poison ivy itching
	USDA NRCS Little Bluestem (Schizachyrium scoparium)	<i>Dry</i>	☉	2' - 4'	June - Dec green to reddish tan	good ornamental grass
	USDA NRCS New England Aster (Aster novae-angliae)	<i>Moist</i>	☉ ☐	1' - 6' 2'-3' spread	Aug - Oct white to purple	pinching may help keep plant compact
	USDA NRCS New York Aster (Aster novi-belgii)	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☐	1' - 4.5' 1'-2.5' spread	July - Oct blue to violet	pinching may help keep plant compact

Herbaceous Plants & Grasses



USDA NRCS

**New York Ironweed
(Vernonia noveboracensis)**

**Soil Moisture
Conditions**

Moist to Wet

Light



Plant Size

3.5' - 8'

Flower

Aug - Oct
reddish-purple
showy flower

Notes

upright form adds
structure to garden



USDA NRCS

**Hairy Beard Tongue
(Penstemon hirsutus)**

Moist



1' - 3'

June - July
pink to purple

trumpet shape flower
with white lips



USDA NRCS

**Pitcher Plant
(Sarracenia purpurea)**

Wet



0.5' - 2'

May - Aug
red to purple

carnivorous
endangered- should
not take from wild



US F&WS

**Poverty Grass
(Danthonia spicata)**

Dry to Moist



0.5' - 2'

May - July
green

thrives in unfertile
soils



US F&WS

**Prickly Pear Cactus
(Opuntia humifusa)**

Dry



0.5' - 1'

June - July
yellow

edible fruit



USDA NRCS

**Purple Coneflower
(Echinacea purpurea)**

Dry to Moist



2' - 5'

April - Sept
lavender to purple

popular herb
good butterfly plant



USDA NRCS

**Rose coreopsis
(Coreopsis rosea)**

Dry to Moist










1' - 2'
4' spread

July - Sept
white to pink

deer resistant - needs
deadheading to
maintain growth

Herbaceous Plants & Grasses

	Name	Soil Moisture Conditions	Light	Plant Size	Flower	Notes
	Seaside Goldenrod (<i>Solidago sempervirens</i>)	<i>Dry to Moist</i>	☉ ☐	1' - 6.5'	July - Nov yellow	thrives in coastal regions
	Sensitive Fern (<i>Onoclea sensibilis</i>)	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☐ ●	1' - 3.5'	May green	reproduction by spores easily transplanted
	Shallow Sedge (<i>Carex lurida</i>)	<i>Wet</i>	☉ ☐	1' - 3.5'	May - Oct light green	seeds have interesting appearance
	Slender Blue Flag (<i>Iris prismatica</i>)	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☐	1' - 3'	May - June blue to purple	flower color great contrast to greens and yellows
	Soft Rush (<i>Juncus effusus</i>)	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☐	1' - 4'	June - Sept greenish brown	can be found in fresh & saltwater areas
	Spotted Joe-Pye-Weed (<i>Eupatorium maculatum</i>)	<i>Moist</i>	☉ ☐	2' - 6.5' 3' spread	July - Sept pale to dark purple	purple spotted stem
	Spotted Horsemint (<i>Monarda punctata</i>)	<i>Dry</i>	☉	0.5' - 3.5'	June - Oct yellow to purple	minty aroma

US F&WS

USDA NRCS

USDA NRCS









USDA NRCS

US F&WS

USDA NRCS

USDA NRCS

Herbaceous Plants & Grasses

	Name	Soil Moisture Conditions	Light	Plant Size	Flower	Notes
	USDA NRCS Sundew (Drosera filiformis)	<i>Wet</i>	☉	3" - 10"	June - Sept lavender to rose	carnivorous endangered- should not take from wild
	USDA NRCS Swamp Milkweed (Asclepias incarnata)	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☀	4' - 5' 2'-3' spread	May - June pink to red	primary species for monarch butterflies
	US F&WS Switchgrass (Panicum virgatum)	<i>Dry to Wet</i>	☉ ☀	3' - 6'	July - Oct green to brown to rose	good erosion control
	USDA NRCS Tall Coneflower (Rudbeckia laciniata)	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☀	1.5' - 10'	July - Sept yellow with green eye	large spacing between petals
	USDA NRCS Wild Bergmont (Monarda fistulosa)	<i>Dry to Moist</i>	☉ ☀	1.5' - 5'	June - Sept pink to purple	minty aroma
	USDA NRCS Wild Columbine (Aquilegia canadensis)	<i>Dry to Moist</i>	☉ ☀	0.5' - 3'	April - July red to yellow	showy flowers
	US F&WS Woolgrass (Scirpus cyperinus)	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉	4' - 5'	Aug - Sept green to brown	high wildlife value
	US F&WS Yellow Spatterdock (Nuphar lutea)	<i>Wet (Emergent)</i>	☉ ☀	1' - 1.5'	May - Oct yellow floating plant	common for show in water gardens



CAPE ATLANTIC CONSERVATION DISTRICT

**For more information about
our Wildlife Habitat Improvements Program,
or other District programs
please contact us at:**

**6260 Old Harding Highway
Mays Landing, New Jersey 08330**

Phone: (609) 625-3144

Fax: (609) 625-7360

Education Line: (609) 625-1517

**Or visit our website:
www.capeatlantic.org**