



## Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program Native Plant Marketing Efforts

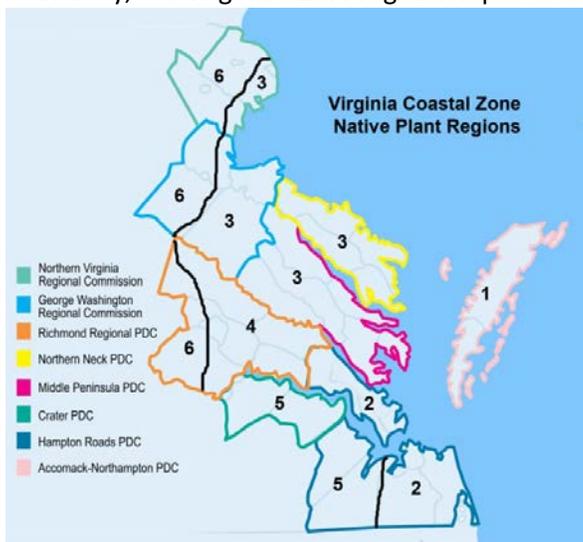
In spring 2009, the Virginia CZM Program and its partners launched the *Plant ES Natives* community-based social marketing campaign. The campaign is going beyond awareness to change individual behavior and establish a social norm for use of native plants. The campaign was designed after listening to Eastern Shore residents and identifying the barriers that were inhibiting their planting of natives, the benefits they would receive by increasing their use of natives, and the outlets through which they receive information. The campaign then selected methods that would most effectively convey the campaign message – “They’re Shore Beautiful!” - to this audience. The campaign strategy uses social marketing tools and techniques that are proven and that focus on making planting natives fun, easy and popular. A colorful guide to Eastern Shore native plants makes it easier for residents to identify native plants, and a series of noticeable, eye-catching, self-explanatory prompts at point of sale makes it easier to find them. Native plant demonstration gardens follow the rule that seeing is believing and showcase the beauty of Eastern Shore native plants. Most importantly, leaders in the community are helping make planting natives more popular.



The ***Plant ES Natives*** campaign social marketing strategy

([www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/CoastalZoneManagement/CZMIssuesInitiatives/NativePlants/PlantESNatives.aspx](http://www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/CoastalZoneManagement/CZMIssuesInitiatives/NativePlants/PlantESNatives.aspx)) has been a model for development of other regional campaigns funded by Virginia CZM. The Northern Neck’s ***Plant NNK Natives: Go Native, Grow Native*** (<http://vnps.org/northernneck/go-native-grow-native/>) is in full swing, and Northern Virginia’s ***Plant NoVA Natives: Naturally Beautiful*** campaign will be piloted this fall 2014 and fully implemented in spring 2015. Pre-campaign partner engagement and research for a regional campaign in Hampton Roads is underway.

Ultimately, the Virginia CZM Program hopes to have a campaign in every coastal planting region - see map at left



showing regions delineated by DCR Natural Heritage. The campaigns are visibly linked through their names and shared design elements in their campaign logos, and programmatically linked as they share their progress and experiences. Many of the same organizations are participating on the regional campaign planning teams, including local chapters of the Virginia Native Plant Society, Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, Audubon and Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Elements of the Plant ES Natives Campaign strategy - such as a regional plant guide (based on the Flora of Virginia) and garden center plant tags, have been easily transferrable to address barriers common in all the regions to planting natives. Each region however is unique and the planning teams have adopted and are continuously evaluating which place-based approaches have been most effective in reaching their gardening population.

The *Plant ES Natives* campaign is being coordinated by the Virginia CZM Program; the *Plant NNK Natives* campaign by the Northern Neck Chapter of the Native Plant Society through a Virginia CZM grant to the Northern Neck PDC; and, the *Plant NoVA Natives* campaign by the Northern Virginia Regional Commission. The Hampton Roads Planning District Commission is leading development of the campaign in that region.

Although the Virginia CZM Program's federal CZMA funding must be spent in Tidewater Virginia, the efforts the program and its partners have generated interest in western areas of the state, and presented an opportunity for the program to encourage and support state-wide coordination and collaboration on native plant marketing. In 2011, the Virginia CZM Program reached out to other state and regional focused partners engaged in native plant marketing efforts and initiated the **Virginia Native Plant Marketing Partnership** (VNPMP)- a forum to collaborate and coordinate, leading to more consistent messaging to the general public and greater efficiencies in the use of limited resources -

[http://www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/CoastalZoneManagement/CZM\\_IssuesInitiatives/NativePlants.aspx](http://www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/CoastalZoneManagement/CZM_IssuesInitiatives/NativePlants.aspx) .

It was in the spirit of expanding and informing a broader partnership that the Virginia CZM Program and the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries - one of the program's network partner agencies - hosted a Virginia Native Plants Marketing Partnership Forum - **Increasing the Use of Virginia Native Plants: Social Marketing, Collaboration and Coordination**, in May 2013, and a second Forum in January 2014 - **Growing Our Community and Cultivating Our Ideas**.

Together the partnership (members list on website) has compiled a *Native Plant Marketing Partner and Resource Directory* and has identified collaborative projects that will be more effectively and efficiently addressed and supported through the partnership. In

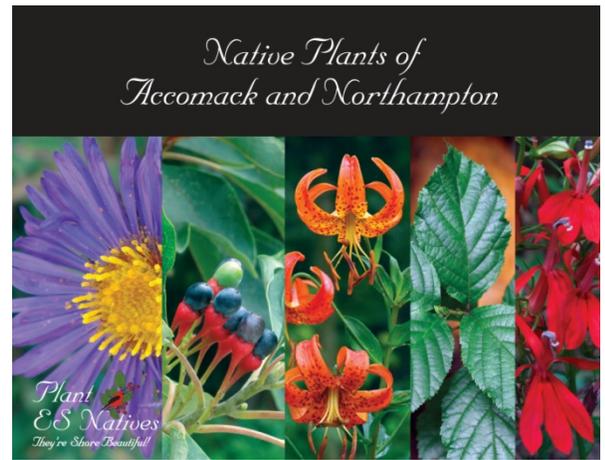
August 2013, a VNPMP Steering Team, based on feedback from the May 2013 forum, prioritized the following goals:

1. Development of a Virginia conservation landscaping certification
2. Development of a framework and guidelines for native plant seed collection/propagation
3. Development of a collaborative web-based site to support the partnership and a centralized website for Virginia native plant information and resources - a hub that would link to partner sites and other pages
4. Development of a state-wide native plant marketing campaign

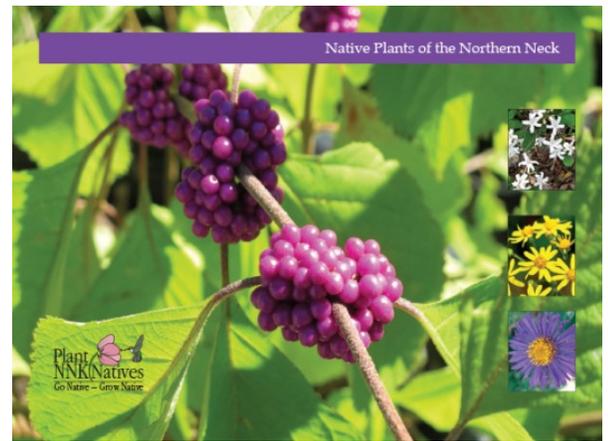
The VNPMP has garnered improved communication and collaboration. For example, in its 2014 Guide to Virginia Growers, the Virginia Nursery and Landscaper Association, a member of the VNPMP Steering Team, has highlighted the availability of plants that are native to the Chesapeake Bay region (according to the USFWS Chesapeake Bay native plant database). The guide also includes ads for the Flora of Virginia and an ad outlining the habitat value of natives. The guide will help the VNPMP reach growers, landscape architects and designers, and contractors and is a great first step in highlighting and increasing the wholesale availability and distribution of Virginia natives.

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(updated 3-20-2014)



[www.deq.virginia.gov/programs/coastalzonemanagement/czmissuesinitiatives/nativeplants/plantesnatives/nativeplantlist.aspx](http://www.deq.virginia.gov/programs/coastalzonemanagement/czmissuesinitiatives/nativeplants/plantesnatives/nativeplantlist.aspx)



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