

# DEMAND FOR VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANTS GROWING



Increasing the amount of native vegetation in Virginia's coastal zone can accomplish many goals: protecting water quality and quantity, increasing carbon dioxide absorption, enhancing wildlife habitat and improving aesthetics and quality of life. In spring 2009, the Virginia CZM Program and its partners launched the *Plant ES Natives* campaign using proven social marketing tools and techniques with a focus on making planting natives fun, easy and popular. Plant ES Natives is going beyond awareness to change individual behavior and establish a social norm for use of native plants.

The campaign strategy 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's planning team then selected community-based social marketing methods that would most effectively convey a campaign message that would resonate with this audience – "They're Shore Beautiful!" For example, a colorful guide to Eastern Shore native plants highlights their beauty and 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 ES native plants. Most importantly, leaders in the community are helping make planting natives more popular.

The *Plant ES Natives* campaign social marketing strategy has been a model for development of other regional campaigns funded by the Virginia CZM Program. The regional campaigns are visibly linked through their names and shared design elements in their campaign logos, and are programmatically linked as they share their progress and experiences. Many of the same regional organizations are participating on the campaign planning teams, including local chapters of the Virginia Native Plant Society, Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, Audubon and VA Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Components of the Plant ES Natives Campaign strategy - such as a regional plant guide (based on the *Flora of Virginia* published in December 2012 - <http://floraofvirginia.org/>) 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 are most effective in reaching their gardening population.



(top left) A native plant garden in Northern Virginia. Image by Sue Dingwell, VNPS. (right - top to bottom) Garden Center banner beckons gardeners on the Northern Neck. Virginia Delegate Robert Bloxom and "John Clayton" planting butterfly weed in Wachapreague. Plant NNK Natives Campaign leaders, Jeff Wainscott and Paula Boudry, share the regional native plant guide at an exhibit. Helen Hamilton, author, highlights the value of native plants and pollinators and her book "Wildflowers and Grasses of Virginia's Coastal Plain on Eastern Shore. Plant tagged with "Plant ES Natives" tag on the Eastern Shore. Images courtesy of Plant NNK Natives campaign and Virginia CZM Program

## Current Coastal Regional Native Plant Campaigns



### Plant ES Natives (region 1) –

[www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/CoastalZoneManagement/CZMIssuesInitiatives/NativePlants/PlantESNatives.aspx](http://www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/CoastalZoneManagement/CZMIssuesInitiatives/NativePlants/PlantESNatives.aspx)

*Primary Audience* – Eastern Shore Gardeners (mainly female, between 35 – 85)

*Secondary Audience* - Garden center owners, retail nursery owners and landscapers

*Key Message* – Eastern Shore native plants are colorful and beautiful!

### Current Campaign Strategy Components/Multi-Media and Other Products –

- *Trained Community Leaders* (pin recognizing trained leader and CL Outreach Kit)
- *Point of Sale* – banners, plant tags, decal, posters, info kiosk at centers; partner native plant sales
- *Demonstration Gardens* – plant ID markers, demo videos
- *Communication materials* – radio ads; native plant guide; website; Facebook; exhibits; native plant of the week articles
- *Shore Big Trees Program*

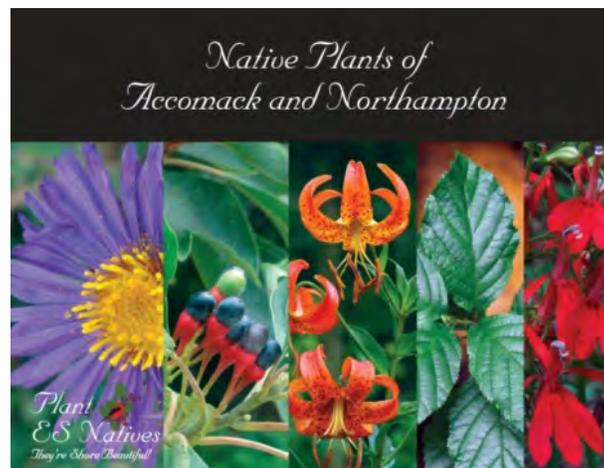
*Virginia CZM and Leveraged Funding* - \$160,000 since 2007 under separate projects, and including Virginia CZM staff time to coordinate; ANPDC FY14 coastal technical assistance grant includes funds for Shore Big Trees (survey of local government interest)



### Recent Campaign Updates of Note:

In the fall of 2014, the *Plant ES Natives* campaign offered a 3 day “Fall Native Plant Celebration”, a series of events to celebrate the beautiful native plants that flower and fruit in fall on the Shore, and to spread the message that the arrival of cool weather is the ideal time to plant trees, shrubs and other perennial plants. Dr. Jeff Kirwan, author of the book “Remarkable Trees of Virginia” gave a presentation at the Eastern Shore Community College. Dr. Kirwan, a Virginia Tech Emeritus professor, also visited Kiptopeke and Metompkin elementary schools, to speak with 4th graders about the special

place native trees have in our lives and Virginia’s history. “John Clayton”, 18th century naturalist, sailed into Wachapreague Harbor to tour the town’s native plant demo garden. Clayton, portrayed by living history re-enactor Richard Cheatham, described his observations of Virginia’s natural world in the 1700s, and his work documenting the magnificent diversity of Virginia’s native plants, which led to the publication of *Flora Virginica* in 1762, Virginia’s first, and until 2012, only plant guide. Virginia Delegate Robert Bloxom helped dedicate the planting of a Water Oak, *Quercus nigra*, in the park, one of many that will be planted as part of the “Shore Big Tree” program to encourage the planting of native trees in public spaces for the benefit and enjoyment of generations to come. The Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission (A-NPDC) dedicated the planting of a White Oak, *Quercus alba*, in Accomac. “These trees have been planted



with the intent that they will grow to one day become “Shore Big Trees” and hopefully these markers will help inspire Eastern Shore residents to appreciate these trees as cornerstones of our communities.” states Curt Smith, Director of Planning at the A-NPDC, said. New technology is being used to make it even easier for gardeners to access information about Eastern Shore native plants, including the addition of a QR code (a 2D bar code used to provide easy access to Internet information through a smartphone or other mobile device) on plant markers in demonstration gardens. Partners also are working on production of demo garden video tours to encourage visitors. Over 6,000 copies of the native plant guide have been distributed.



## Plant NNK Natives (region 3) –

<http://vnps.org/northernneck/go-native-grow-native/>

**Primary Audience** – Northern Neck Gardeners (demographic mirrors ES; retirees moving to area)

**Secondary Audience** - Garden center owners, retail nursery owners and landscapers

**Key Message** – Northern Neck native plants help give the Northern Neck its unique character and are colorful and beautiful!

### Current Campaign Strategy Components/Multi-Media and Other Products –

- **Point of Sale** – native plant days at local retailers, banners, plant tags, flags; notecards sold at retailers; partner native plant sales
- **Communication materials** – native plant guide; website; exhibits; native plant of the month articles

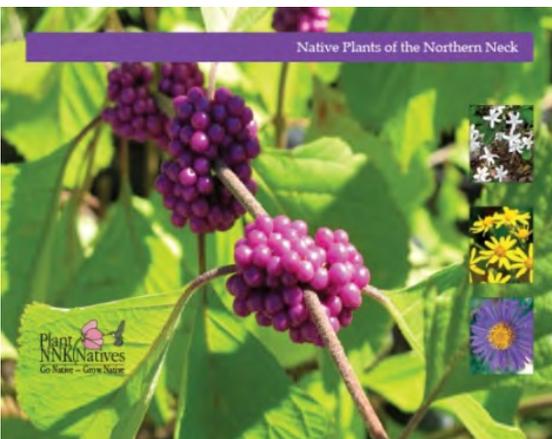
### Virginia CZM and Leveraged Funding -

FY 2010 Task 50.10 - \$15,000 (match \$22,096)

FY 2014, Task 54 - \$16,035 (match \$16,890)

### Recent Campaign Updates of Note:

- **New publications in 2015:**
  - *Deer Resistant Native Plants for the Northern Neck*
  - *Native Plants for Northern Neck Bay-Friendly Properties*
  - *Salt Tolerant Northern Neck Native Plants Salt*



A painted lady butterfly is resting on a Virginia sweetspire.  
Photo by Janet Pawlukiewicz

### Go Native, Grow Native

submitted by Gary Chafin and Janet Pawlukiewicz:  
of the Northern Neck Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

**Virginia Sweetspire** (Itea virginica) is one of the most beautiful and versatile deciduous shrubs native to the Northern Neck. It grows on creek banks or on other wet areas where it forms thickets from underground roots. Because of its thick roots, you may use it in the landscape for erosion control on banks. At maturity, it is usually about three feet in height and can reach to eight feet. It does best in dappled shade but tolerates more shade. It has attractive, lightly fragrant, white four-inch flower spikes in late spring after most other flowering shrubs have finished blooming. In the fall, its leaves turn red and purple. It is drought tolerant. The shape is informal and woody, only needing light pruning to keep in bounds. It provides food for the holly azure butterfly caterpillar. *Friend us on Facebook at the Northern Neck Chapter Virginia Native Plant Society.*

The *Plant NNK Natives* campaign, launched in 2013, is making a great impact on Virginia's Northern Neck. One of the key marketing pieces in the campaign's strategy – *Native Plants of the Northern Neck* – is clearly helping to sell the beauty of Northern Neck native plants. Over 3,000 copies of the guide have been distributed. "Customers come in with plants circled in the guide and ask how they can get them," one local retailer reported to volunteer campaign staff. "During a Native Plant Day at the store, sales more than doubled what they had anticipated," says Janet Pawlukiewicz, Northern Neck Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society secretary and *Plant NNK Natives* Campaign coordinator. The Rappahannock Record cited the guide as the "best regional catalog" in 2013.

*"To increase demand we knew we had to highlight the beauty as well as the environmental benefits of native plants in our campaign. To*

*increase supply, we partnered with local garden centers, asked them to stock more Northern Neck natives and in exchange, we provide colorful banners and plant tags to promote sales,"* according to Pawlukiewicz. The campaign is also showcasing native plants in monthly newspaper articles, in a new brochure of garden designs, and in area demonstration gardens. This spring the campaign held additional "native plant days" at local garden centers and farmers markets. In October 2014, the campaign sponsored a native plant celebration at Stratford Hall, including dedication of a new native plant habitat garden and a visit from 18th century botanist John Clayton. A 2014 grant from Virginia CZM has funded development of new campaign materials and an evaluation survey to gauge the effectiveness of the campaign strategy.



## Plant NoVA Natives (regions 6 and 3) –

[www.plantnovanatives.com](http://www.plantnovanatives.com)

*Primary Audience* – Homeowners living in single family homes or townhouses with incomes of \$150,000 who care for plants on their property. Age was not a strong factor in determining interest in native plants.

*Secondary Audience*- Landscaping industry and garden center staff

*Key Message* – Northern Virginia native plants are colorful and beautiful and require less maintenance when established

### *Current Campaign Strategy Components/Multi-Media and Other Products -*

- *Trained Community Leaders* (Community Leader Coordinator and CL Outreach Kit)
- *Point of Sale* – info kiosk at garden centers, banners, plant tags
- *Demonstration Gardens* – plant ID markers
- *Communication materials* – native plant guide; native plant cards or brochures at garden centers highlighting either native trees, shrubs, ferns, vine or forbs; website; exhibits

*Virginia CZM and Leveraged Funding* – FY 2011, Task 54.11 - \$48,500; FY15 Task 94.03 - \$39,476; FY16 Task 54

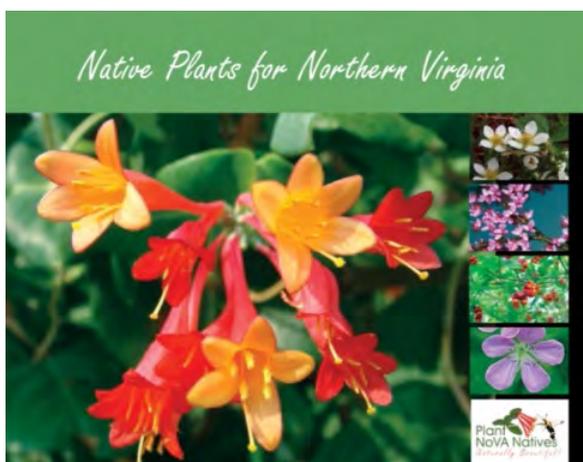
### *Recent Campaign Updates of Note:*

- In early 2015, revised and reprinted guide
- Campaign recognized by the Northern Virginia Region Commissioners, particularly for its successful focus on collaboration
- FY15 funding – deliverables include new enforceable policies (revisions to local weed ordinances and county parks policies to protect and increase native vegetation)



The *Plant NoVA Natives* campaign – Fairfax, Arlington, Loudon and Prince William – was launched during a pilot in fall 2014 and fully implemented in fall 2015. The campaign is being coordinated by the Northern Virginia Regional Commission, and guided by a planning team chaired by the current president of the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society. Design of the campaign is being guided by pre-campaign research conducted in 2012. “We couldn’t be more pleased with the level of interest the *Plant NoVA Natives* Campaign has received from people throughout the region,” commented Corey Miles, Northern Virginia Planning District Commission, and Director of the campaign.

The four workshops the campaign held in 2014 to introduce folks to the campaign and recruit Community Leaders were attended by almost 200 people in all. As a result, of the overwhelming interest in the campaign, the Northern Virginia Regional Commission, with Virginia CZM Program funding, hired a Community Leader Coordinator to help manage volunteers and campaign launch activities. “We also have been very lucky to have incredibly enthusiastic and knowledgeable partners on our planning team,” shares Miles. The collaborative effort of the planning team has resulted in a new CZM funded and designed Guide to Native Plants for Northern Virginia. Partners have distributed over 5,000 copies of the guide.

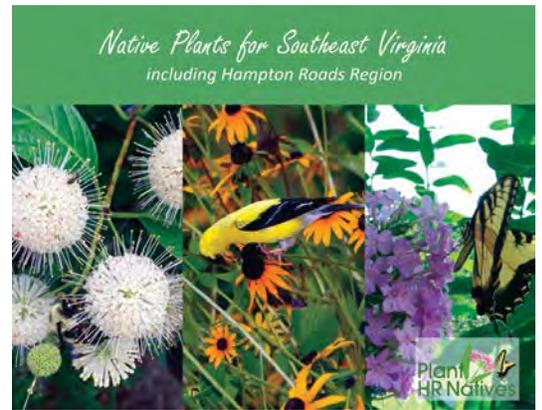




## Plant HR Natives (regions 2 and 5) –

Virginia CZM Program awarded a grant (FY13 Task 55 - \$19,651) to the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission to bring

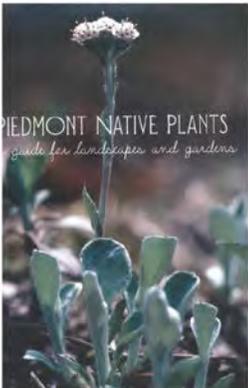
together stakeholders in 2014 and 2015 to conduct an assessment and strategic plan to increase use of natives in the region. This plan is complete, and Virginia CZM Program worked with a regional team to produce a native plant guide for Southeast Virginia including the Hampton Roads region.



## Plant CR Natives (regions 3 and 6) –

In September 2016, a regional team in the George Washington Regional Commission completed design of a strategy for the Plant Central Rappahannock Natives campaign (FY15 Task 47 – portion of \$30,000 technical assistance project). The team began implementation of this strategy in October 2016, including development of a regional native plant guide (FY16 Task 50 competitive PDC grant).

## Regional Campaigns West of Tidewater Virginia (outside Coastal Zone):

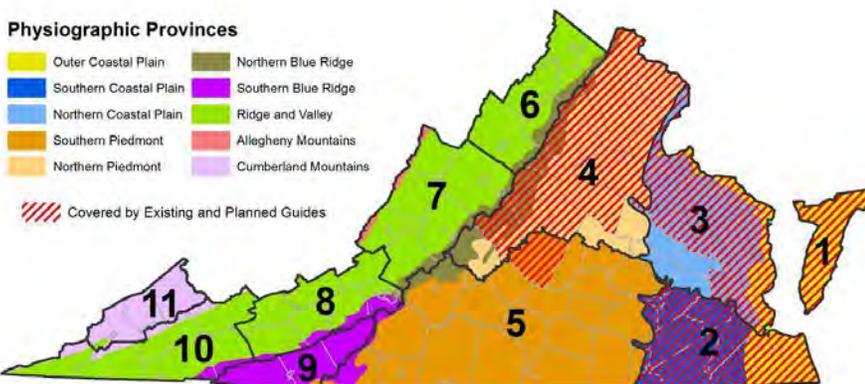


### Piedmont Natives –

<http://www.albemarle.org/nativeplants/>

Looking to the coastal regional native plant campaigns as a model, the *Piedmont Natives* campaign published a regional plant guide in June 2015. The campaign covers the counties of Albemarle, Charlottesville, Buckingham, Culpeper, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, Madison, Nelson, and Orange.

## Recommended Regions for Native Plant Marketing



The Virginia CZM Program hopes to have a campaign in every coastal planting region – as delineated on the map above by DCR Natural Heritage – these regions have been informed foremost by Virginia’s physiographic provinces. Other consideration has been given to regional identity and the boundaries of the 8 coastal planning district commissions, which has facilitated CZM funding.

For more information on the coastal regional native plant campaigns, visit <http://www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/CoastalZoneManagement/CZMIssuesInitiatives/NativePlants.aspx> or contact Virginia Witmer, Outreach Coordinator, Virginia CZM Program – 804.698.4320 or [Virginia.Witmer@deq.virginia.gov](mailto:Virginia.Witmer@deq.virginia.gov) Coastal regional native plant campaigns funded by Virginia CM through grants from NOAA.



# VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANTS PARTNERSHIP

The Virginia Native Plants Partnership (VNPP) was established in August 2011. The purpose of the Partnership is to:

*Identify and prioritize opportunities to collaborate on Virginia native plant communication and marketing efforts and form cohesive and coordinated messaging and strategies to increase local availability and use of native plants state-wide.*

A VNPP Steering Team – member organizations and representatives listed on next page – identified collaborative projects that would be more effectively and efficiently addressed through the partnership: a) support for a Virginia conservation landscaping certification; b) strategies to help increase the availability of native plants including a framework and guidelines for native plant seed collection/propagation; and, c) coordination of state-wide native plant marketing strategies.

The VNPP is currently drafting a 2016 – 2020 Action Plan based on these priorities, Steering Team discussions and feedback from the two forums held in May 2013 and January 2014. The Action Plan is focused on strategies and actions to address four goals:

- 1) Increase collaboration and coordination among partners engaged in native plant education, communication and marketing;
- 2) Increase Virginia Grown native plant stock (percentage goal to be determined);
- 3) Increase the availability of native plants at local plant retailers (percentage goal to be determined); and,
- 4) Increase demand and use of Virginia native plants by landscape and land use professions, homeowners, landscaping and demonstration restoration projects on public and private lands.

Efforts to improve communication and collaboration through the VNPP has borne fruit! In its 2014 Guide to Virginia Growers, the Virginia Nursery and Landscaper Association (VNLA) highlighted for the first time the availability of plants that are native to the Chesapeake Bay region, This a great first step in efforts to increase the wholesale availability and distribution of Virginia natives. A commercial industry survey of growers and plant specifiers is being distributed to gauge their perspectives on the efficacy of propagating and selling a broader diversity of native plant species.

## Partnership Timeline

*August 2011 – Partnership Formed through Virginia CZM Program*

*May 2013 -*

**Forum – Increasing the Use of Virginia Native Plants: Social Marketing, Collaboration and Coordination**

*August 2013 – Partnership Steering Team Established*

*January 2014 –*

**Forum - Growing Our Community and Cultivating Our Ideas Forum**

*September 2014 - Steering Team sets goals for Partnership 2015 – 2020 Action Plan.*

**Partnership Website -**

[www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/CoastalZoneManagement/CZMIssuesInitiatives/NativePlants.aspx](http://www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/CoastalZoneManagement/CZMIssuesInitiatives/NativePlants.aspx)



**Native Plants Marketing Partner and Resource Directory**

[www.deq.virginia.gov/Portals/0/DEQ/CoastalZoneManagement/Virginia\\_Native\\_Plants\\_Marketing\\_Partners\\_and\\_Resources\\_Directory\\_revised\\_April\\_2014.pdf](http://www.deq.virginia.gov/Portals/0/DEQ/CoastalZoneManagement/Virginia_Native_Plants_Marketing_Partners_and_Resources_Directory_revised_April_2014.pdf)

## Virginia Native Plants Partnership Steering Team Organizations

Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program (*Co-Chair*)

Virginia Dept of Game and Inland Fisheries (*Co-Chair*)

Albemarle County

Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve of VA

Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council

Flora of Virginia

Hampton Roads Planning District Commission

Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden

Norfolk Botanical Gardens

Northern Virginia Regional Commission

Piedmont Environmental Council

Virginia Audubon Council

Virginia Dept of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs

Virginia Dept of Conservation and Recreation, Natural Heritage Division

Virginia Dept of Environmental Quality

Virginia Dept of Forestry

Virginia Department of Transportation

Virginia Institute of Marine Science

Virginia Master Gardener Program

Virginia Master Naturalist Program

Virginia Native Plant Society

Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association

Virginia Society of Landscape Designers

VA Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Wetlands Watch

Williamsburg Botanical Gardens

Virginia Grower Reps

***For more information about the Virginia Native Plants Partnership contact:***

Virginia Witmer, Virginia CZM Program (co-chair) – 804.698.4320; [Virginia.Witmer@deq.virginia.gov](mailto:Virginia.Witmer@deq.virginia.gov) or  
Carol Heiser, Virginia Dept of Game and Inland Fisheries (co-chair) – 804-367-6989;

[Carol.Heiser@dgif.virginia.gov](mailto:Carol.Heiser@dgif.virginia.gov)

*(updated November 2016)*



*The 2014 VNLA Field Day featured Doug Tallamy, author of *Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants* and *The Living Landscape; Designing for Beauty and Biodiversity in the Home Garden* (photos right). Images courtesy of Virginia CZM Program.*