

Eastern Shore Native Plant Campaign Launched

A new campaign is under way to increase the use of plants and vegetative cover that are native to Virginia's eastern shore. The "[Plant Eastern Shore Natives](#)" campaign is a multi-year effort that kicked off on April 1, 2009, with radio ads urging residents to look for the "Plant ES Natives" plant tag on their next visit to an Accomack or Northampton garden center. The campaign, initiated by the [Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program Office](#) at the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, focuses on the message that "Eastern Shore Native Plants are Shore Beautiful!"

Eastern Shore native plants are encouraged because they have been part of the Shore's local ecology prior to John Smith's landing and are adapted to the Shore's local soils and climate conditions, resulting in many [benefits to the region](#), its residents and migratory birds including:

- Generally require less watering and fertilizing than non-natives and are less susceptible to drought conditions. Less watering means conserving potable water supplies for non-watering uses.
- Are often more resistant to insects and disease and thus less likely to need pesticides that may leach into water supplies or run off into shellfish aquaculture farms.
- Provide critical habitat and food for the millions of migratory birds that rely on Virginia's Eastern Shore as a rest stop each spring and fall.
- Help preserve the diversity, beauty and function of the shore's natural ecosystems.

The launch of the campaign was marked with a media event on Arbor Day, April 24, 2009, in Willis Wharf Harbor. Local government officials and community leaders from Accomack and Northampton counties were invited to help complete installation of an eastern Shore native plant demonstration landscape around the Willis Wharf Wildlife Observation Deck in the village. Other components of the campaign include [a guide to plants native to the counties of Accomack and Northampton](#); an exhibit; garden center banners; decals; and pins to be worn by community leaders who carry the campaign message into the community.

Design of the new "Plant ES Natives" campaign was guided by research conducted on the Shore through interviews, focus groups and a written survey of private and public landowners, garden centers, nurseries, landscapers and others. Funding and coordination of the campaign is provided by Virginia Coastal Zone Management through the Virginia Seaside Heritage Program to help improve wildlife habitat and water quality.

The campaign was initiated by the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program Office at the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality along with many [partner organizations](#) as part of the [Virginia Seaside Heritage Program](#).

To learn more about the campaign and how these native plants are "Shore Beautiful," visit www.deq.virginia.gov/coastal/go-native.html or contact Virginia Witmer, outreach coordinator for the Coastal Zone Management Program at DEQ, 804-698-4320, vgwitmer@deq.virginia.gov, or Laura McKay, program manager for the Coastal Zone Management Program at 804-698-4320, Laura.McKay@deq.virginia.gov.



The Plant Eastern Shore Natives campaign logo depicts the Downy Serviceberry – one of many beautiful native plants with dark green foliage and colorful flowers and berries - and the Scarlet Tanager - one of many migratory songbirds that use the Shore as a rest stop and rely on native shrubs and trees for the berries and insects it needs to fuel its long journey.