



**TOWN OF SHELTER ISLAND
CONSERVATION ADVISORY COUNCIL
NATIVE PLANT LIST
Prepared by Tim Purtell**

In a shrinking natural world, native plants in our gardens and landscapes have become an increasingly vital (and easy) way to support threatened populations of pollinators like bees and butterflies. The monarch butterfly is a perfect example of the sometimes-intricate connection between plants and insects. The monarch lays eggs only on milkweed species. The caterpillar (right, on butterfly weed) consumes the leaves which contain toxins, rendering the monarch unpalatable to most birds. (Its orange, black, and white colors are a warning.) While the flowers of the non-native butterfly bush provide food for the monarch and other insects, it is not a host plant.



Our gardens are filled with cherished non-native trees and shrubs such as crape myrtles, double-file viburnums, Asian hydrangeas, butterfly bush, and roses, and some of them provide food for pollinators. However, natives that supply food and serve as host plants support a wider array of insects that in turn attract birds (also in decline) that rely on them to rear their young. Native plants also reduce the need for insecticides and herbicides, and they can be mixed with non-native garden plants. Homeowners can also consider replacing an underutilized section of lawn with a border or mini meadow of drought tolerant natives that rarely need water once established.

This list has a variety of native trees, shrubs, flowering perennials, grasses, ferns, and vines that thrive on Shelter Island, depending upon light and soil conditions. And though many natives can be deer and rabbit resistant, some are not, and resistance varies in different areas of the Island.

PLANT LIST KEY

D (Deciduous), E (Evergreen), S (Sun), Sh (Shade), D (Dry Soil), M (Moist Soil)

TREES

American holly (*Ilex opaca*) E, S/Sh, D
American larch (*Larix laricina*) S, D/M
American hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*) S/Sh, D/M
Atlantic white cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*) E, S, M
Balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*) E, S, M
Basswood (*Tilia americana*) S, M
Black birch (*Betula lenta*) S, M
Black cherry (*Prunus serotina*)
Eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) S/Sh, D/M
Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) S, D
Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*) S/Sh, D/M
Gray birch (*Betula populifolia*) S, D/M
Hophornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*) S/Sh, D/M
Pignut hickory (*Carya glabra*) S, D
Red maple (*Acer rubrum*) S, D/M
River birch (*Betula nigra*) S, D/M
Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) S/Sh, D/M
Sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*) S/Sh, D/M
Tuliptree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) S, D/M
Tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*) S, D/M
White Pine (*Pinus strobus*) E, S, D

THE MIGHTY OAK

According to entomologist Douglas Tallamy, author of *The Nature of Oaks: The Rich Ecology of Our Most Essential Native Trees*, oak trees “are great at sequestering carbon.... They’re great at pumping that carbon into the soil...and they’re great at managing our watershed, because they have such big canopies and big root systems.” Oaks also host to a remarkable 900 species of caterpillars, mostly moths, that are essential food for birds and their young. If you have the space, plant an oak tree.

Black oak (*Quercus velutina*) S, D
Chestnut oak (*Quercus montana*) S, D
Northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*) S, D/M
Pin oak (*Quercus palustris*) S, D
Post oak (*Quercus stellata*) S, D
Scarlet oak (*Quercus coccinea*) S, D/
White oak (*Quercus alba*) S, D



SHRUBS

American yew (*Taxus canadensis*) E, Sh, D
Bayberry (*Morella pensylvanica*) S, D
Beach plum (*Prunus maritima*) S, D
Black huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*) S/Sh, D
Eastern Shadbush (*Amelanchier canadensis*) S/Sh, D
Fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatica*) S, D
Gray dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*) S/Sh, D/M
Groundsel bush (*Baccharis halimifolia*) S, D/M
Highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium corybosum*) S/Sh, D/M
Inkberry (*Ilex glabra*) E, S/Sh, D/M
Lowbush blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*) S/Sh, D
Northern bush honeysuckle (*Diervilla lonicera*) S/Sh, D
Oakleaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*) S/Sh, D/M
Pagoda dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*) Sh, D/M
Shrubby St. Johnswort (*Hypericum prolificum*) S/Sh, D
Smooth hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*) Sh, D/M
Smooth sumac (*Rhus copallina*) S, D
Smooth shadbush (*Amelanchier laevis*) S/Sh, D
Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) Sh, M, spicebush swallowtail butterfly host
Summersweet (*Clethra alnifolia*) S/Sh, D/M
Sweet bay magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*) S/Sh, M
Sweetfern (*Comptonia peregrina*) S, D
Sweetshrub (*Calycanthus floridus* ‘Athens’) S/Sh, D/M
Virginia sweetspire (*Itea virginica*) S/Sh, D
Witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) S/Sh, D

VERSATILE VIBURNUMS

Viburnums can be workhorses in the garden and landscape. Arrowwood viburnum (*V. dentatum*) grows up to 12’ high, thrives in sun or light shade and wet or dry soil. It blooms in June with clusters of white flowers, followed by blue berries relished by birds. The black haw viburnum (*V. prunifolium*), tolerates more shade and drier soil and can grow into a large shrub. It also has clusters of white flowers (right) followed by blue berries. Both viburnums can be used in natural settings or as hedging between neighbors. Mapleleaf viburnum (*V. acerifolium*) is low-growing woodland shrub.



FLOWERING PERENNIALS

Blue false indigo (*Baptisia australis*) S, D
Broad-leaved mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*) S, D
Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) S, D, monarch butterfly host
Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) Sh, M
Common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)
Dwarf crested iris (*Iris cristata*) Sh, D
Green and Gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*) Sh, D/M
Hyssop-leaved boneset (*Eupatorium hyssopifolium*) S, D
Joe pye weed (*Euopium purpureum*) S/Sh, D/M
Maryland goldenaster (*Chryopsis mariana*) S, D
Narrow-leaved mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum tenuifolium*) S, D
Nodding onion (*Allium cernuum*) S/Sh, D
Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*) S, D
Showy aster (*Eurybia spectabilis*) S, D
Spotted horsemint (*Monarda punctata*) S, D
Swamp mallow (*Hibiscus moscheutos*) S, M
Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) S/Sh, M, monarch butterfly host
Virginia mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum virginianum*) S, D
Wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) S, D
Wild columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) Sh, D
Wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*) Sh, D/M

THE VALUE OF GOLDENRODS

A sturdy perennial that provides late summer and early fall nourishment for bees and other insects, goldenrod is mistakenly blamed for seasonal allergies. The real culprit is ragweed, which is primarily wind pollinated. The below list has a variety of species for sun, shade, and coastal conditions. Avoid the weedy and invasive Canada goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*).

Blue-stem goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*) S/Sh, D
Early goldenrod (*Solidago juncea*) S/Sh, D
Gray goldenrod (*Solidago nemoralis*) S/Sh, D
Licorice-leaved goldenrod (*Solidago odora*) S, D
Seaside goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens*) S, D
Showy goldenrod (*Solidago speciosa*) S, D
White goldenrod (*Solidago bicolor*) S/Sh, D
Zig zag goldenrod (*Solidago flexicaulis*) S, D



GRASSES AND SEDGES

American beach grass (*Ammophila breviligulata*)
Big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*) S, D
Blue wood sedge (*Carex flaccosperma*) Sh, W/D
Bristle-leaved sedge (*Carex eburnea*) Sh, D
Bushy bluestem (*Andropogon glomeratus*) S, D
Eastern bottle-brush grass (*Elymus hystrix*) Sh, D
Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) S, D
Little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) S, D
Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*) Sh, D
Prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*) S/Sh, D/M
Purple lovegrass (*Eragrostis spectabilis*) S, D
Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*) S, D
Wavy hair grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*) Sh, D
White tinged sedge (*Carex albicans*) Sh, D

FERNS

Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*) Sh, D/M
Eastern hay-scented fern (*Dennstaedtia punctiloba*) Sh, D/M
New York fern (*Thelypteris noveboracensis*) Sh, D/M
Ostrich fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*) Sh, D/M
Rock polypody (*Polypody virginianum*) Sh, D
Sensitive fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*) Sh, D/M

YUCCA

Adam's needle (*Yucca filamentosa*) S/Sh, D

EASTERN PRICKLY PEAR

Colonies of the cold hardy eastern prickly pear (*Opuntia humifusa*) can be spotted along the first Ram Island Drive causeway and in other Island locations. It's a great garden plant for dry, sandy soil in full sun. It survives freezing temperatures partly by decreasing the water in its pads. In the winter months, the pads look shriveled and dead, but they plump up again as soon as the weather warms. The delightful yellow flowers are visited by metallic green sweat bees and the small fruits are supposedly edible.



VINES

Trumpet creeper (*Campis radicans*) S, D

Trumpet honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) S/Sh, D

Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) S/Sh, D

American wisteria (*Wisteria frutescens*) S/Sh, D

SUGGESTED READING

Rick Darke, *The American Woodland Garden: Capturing the Spirit of the Deciduous Forest*

Rick Darke, *The Encyclopedia of Grasses for a Living Landscape*

Rick Darke and Douglas W. Tallamy, *The Living Landscape: Designing for Beauty and Biodiversity in The Home Garden*

Michael A. Dirr, *Dirr's Encyclopedia of Trees & Shrubs*

Uli Lorimer, *The Northeast Native Primer: 235 Plants for an Earth-Friendly Garden*

Douglas W. Tallamy, *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Nature That Starts in Your Yard*

Douglas W. Tallamy, *The Nature of Oaks: The Rich Ecology of Our Most Essential Trees*

Douglas W. Tallamy, *How Can I Help? Saving Nature with Your Yard*

WEBSITES

Perfect Earth Project: Two Thirds for the Birds

<https://perfectearthproject.org/234-birds>

Long Island Native Plant Initiative (LINPI)

<https://www.linpi.org>

ReWild Long Island

<https://www.rewildlongisland.org>



