



## Using Native Plants

The Trust's Native Plant project works with Members to use and feature plants indigenous to the Island's natural habitat.

The semi-annual Native Plant Sale is a popular event and an excellent resource for insight and materials to work best for each of the Island's unique properties.

Plants grow and spread quickly in Spring Island's subtropical climate. A realistic plan for managing vegetative growth around your home should include the right plant selection, where and when to mow, when to use herbicides and when to remove plants by hand.

### ***Deer-resistant landscaping***

Deer are a great challenge for the avid gardener. They often consume new plants that have been well fertilized and watered and are therefore tastier than their wild counterparts. Hungry deer will browse almost any plant. For suggestions on deer deterrent sprays and other scent-based products contact the Landscape Ecologist.

### ***Groundcovers***

Selecting appropriate groundcover plantings is an important part of the landscaping plan because they help to prevent undesired species from getting established. Groundcovers must grow quickly and be attractive in many seasons. They also should require little maintenance. Unfortunately, plants that meet these requirements tend to be aggressive and invasive.

Popular groundcovers like English ivy (*Hedera helix*), large periwinkle (*Vinca major*) or Asiatic jasmine (*Trachelospermum asiaticum*) cover a lot of ground but can also overgrow other landscaping, natural areas, shrubs and trees. It requires a great deal of work to keep them under control. If you decide to use these species you should:

Inspect their boundaries regularly to make sure they don't escape.

Keep a well-maintained border around the groundcover.

Keep the groundcover away from the drip line of ornamental shrubs. Many shrubs, such as camellias, azaleas and hydrangeas, have shallow roots that are forced to

compete with these groundcovers for water and nutrients. Keep groundcovers away from trees to prevent them from climbing. Consider removing and replacing invasive groundcovers with attractive mulch or native groundcovers.

### ***Native vines for the landscape***

If you need a quick, attractive cover for a trellis, arbor or wall, consider using a native vine to add diversity and color. Choose from the following alternatives:

Passion vine (*Passiflora incarnata*) has very impressive flowers. The leaves are larval food for the Gulf fritillary, zebra heliconian and other caterpillars. The flowers are also visited by Gulf fritillary butterflies. The entire plant dies back to the ground each winter but re-emerges in spring so it never gets too large or out of control. It grows in sun or part shade.

Coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) is our native honeysuckle and is not to be confused with the invasive Japanese honeysuckle, which has white and cream colored blooms. Coral honeysuckle has beautiful evergreen leaves and red blooms with a yellow throat that are produced from late spring until late summer. The flowers are attractive to butterflies and hummingbirds. The red berries are also attractive to birds. Coral honeysuckle prefers sun or partial shade and moist soil.

Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) loses its leaves in winter after it puts on a beautiful fall display. It can grow in sun or shade and attaches to flat surfaces with tendrils. It also produces black berries attractive to songbirds.

Yellow jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) is the state flower of South Carolina. It has narrow evergreen leaves and produces fragrant yellow flowers in late winter or early spring. It will grow in sun or part shade.

Trumpet creeper (*Campsis radicans*) is a great deciduous vine for climbing flat surfaces. Many of our native vines climb by twining around structure, but trumpet creeper attaches with small root-like appendages. Its compound leaves drop in winter but the flowers are abundant in the heat of summer and are particularly attractive to hummingbirds.

American wisteria (*Wisteria frutescens*) is our native wisteria. It has dark, shiny, compound leaves and is well behaved, unlike the invasive Asian species. It will grow in sun or shade and has fragrant blooms in late spring after the leaves emerge.

### ***Landscaping that benefits pollinators***

Plants can be pollinated by many species of wildlife, including, birds, bats, moths,

bees, butterflies, wasps and beetles. Native plants that attract these pollinators contribute greatly to a diverse habitat.

*NOTE: Some stores now sell nectar plants like lantana that have been raised from seeds treated with neonicotinoids, an insecticide that contaminates the entire plant and is harmful to pollinators. Read the fine print on labels before buying plants in order to avoid using these plants in your garden.*

### ***Honeybees***

Beekeeping has become a popular volunteer activity and several members manage hives on their property. The health and abundance of honeybees depends on a number of factors. Sources of nectar and nectar flow are critical to honeybee survival. The wax moth can destroy a hive in less than 10 days. Their larvae destroy both the honeycomb and the brood comb. Hives can also be lost to “Sudden Colony Collapse.”

Bees visit flowers more than 300,000 times to produce one pound of honey. Promote honey production and enhance your landscape by adding native plants that are attractive to honeybees. Be sure to protect these desirable species when you are pruning or maintaining your natural landscape areas.

### ***Butterflies***

The right habitat for adult butterflies includes flowers and also plants used by the butterfly’s larvae. The use of the right native plants will match the habitat needs of butterflies that have historically inhabited this area.

### ***Hummingbirds***

Many of the same plant species that attract butterflies and bees also attract hummingbirds. As a general rule, however, hummingbirds are particularly attracted to red or orange tubular-shaped flowers.