

Native Plants for your Landscape

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What is a “Native” Plant?

- A plant that has been in the state prior to European settlement (early 1500s)
 - Florida statute 5B-40.00: "A plant species that is presumed to have been present in Florida before European contact."
- What about at the ecosystem level?
 - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (11): "Native. With respect to a particular ecosystem, a species that, other than as a result of an introduction, historically occurred or currently occurs in that ecosystem."
- Due to climate change and human disturbance (i.e. development, fire suppression, dams, roads, etc.) many plants native to the state are not native to the ecosystems they now inhabit
 - Ex: Oak trees in a longleaf pine ecosystem
- <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/ep297> - Native Plants: An Overview



Importance of Native Plants

- Biodiversity
 - “*variety of life and its processes*” – Hostetler & Main
 - Florida has about 700 native species of vertebrates, 2,850 native plant species and at least 15,000 native invertebrate species
 - Florida also has 224 plant species, 14 vertebrate species, and 1500 invertebrate **endemic** species found nowhere else in the world!
- Both native and non-native plant species contribute to biodiversity, but not in the same way
- Landscaping largely with non-native plants and turf limits the diversity of native species, and can alter surrounding ecosystems in ways that no longer support native species
 - Approximately 4 million acres of managed turfgrass in FL
- Compounded with excessive use of irrigation, fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides

Importance of Native Plants

- By adding more native plants to the landscape, one can increase the number and diversity of native plants, birds, butterflies, bees, etc.

“Overall, landscaping with many different native plants improves urban biodiversity by simultaneously creating wildlife habitat and increasing the presence of native plants in urban areas.” – Hostetler & Main

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/UW329> – Conservation Subdivision: Construction Phase – Native Landscape Palette

Selecting your Native Plants

- Principle #1: Right Plant, Right Place
 - Plants that are best suited for your site conditions will be happiest and will need little maintenance from you!
- Know the mature size of the plant you want and give it space to grow
 - Small/medium sized trees should be at least 15 feet from foundations
 - Shrubs should be ~3 feet from center of plant to foundation
 - Avoid overcrowding
- Match the light and water conditions to what the plant prefers
- Select plants hardy in your zone (Marion County is zone 9a)
 - USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map
- Even native plants if put in the wrong place can be problematic
 - Many have specific needs that must be met (ex. Swamp milkweed)
 - Some can become quite weedy and aggressive (ex. Scarlet Salvia)

Native Groundcovers



Sunshine Mimosa

- aka Powderpuff Mimosa (*Mimosa strigillosa*)
- Low-growing, deciduous groundcover with soft foliage
- Blooms are highly attractive to pollinators spring – fall
- 4 – 5 plants cover ~300ft²



Beach Sunflower

Helianthus debilis

- aka dune sunflower
- Excellent spreading ground cover ; volunteers
- Self-seeding perennial
- Grows up to 2.5' tall and 2 – 8' wide (depending on subspecies)
- Very drought tolerant
- Full sun
- Attracts many pollinators



Twinflower

Dyschoriste oblongifolia

- Perennial, grows to about 1' high
- Semi-evergreen groundcover with attractive purple flowers
- Host plant for common buckeye butterflies
- Full to partial sun, dry to moist well-drained soils
- Swamp Twinflower (*D. humistrata*) prefers moist soils, stays under 1' tall, short-lived perennial



Frogfruit

Phyla nodiflora

- aka Turkey Tangle Frogfruit
- Full to partial sun; average dry to moist sites
- Small flowers are highly attractive to pollinators
- Low-lying evergreen groundcover, up to 6" when blooming
- Host and nectar plant for many butterfly and moth species



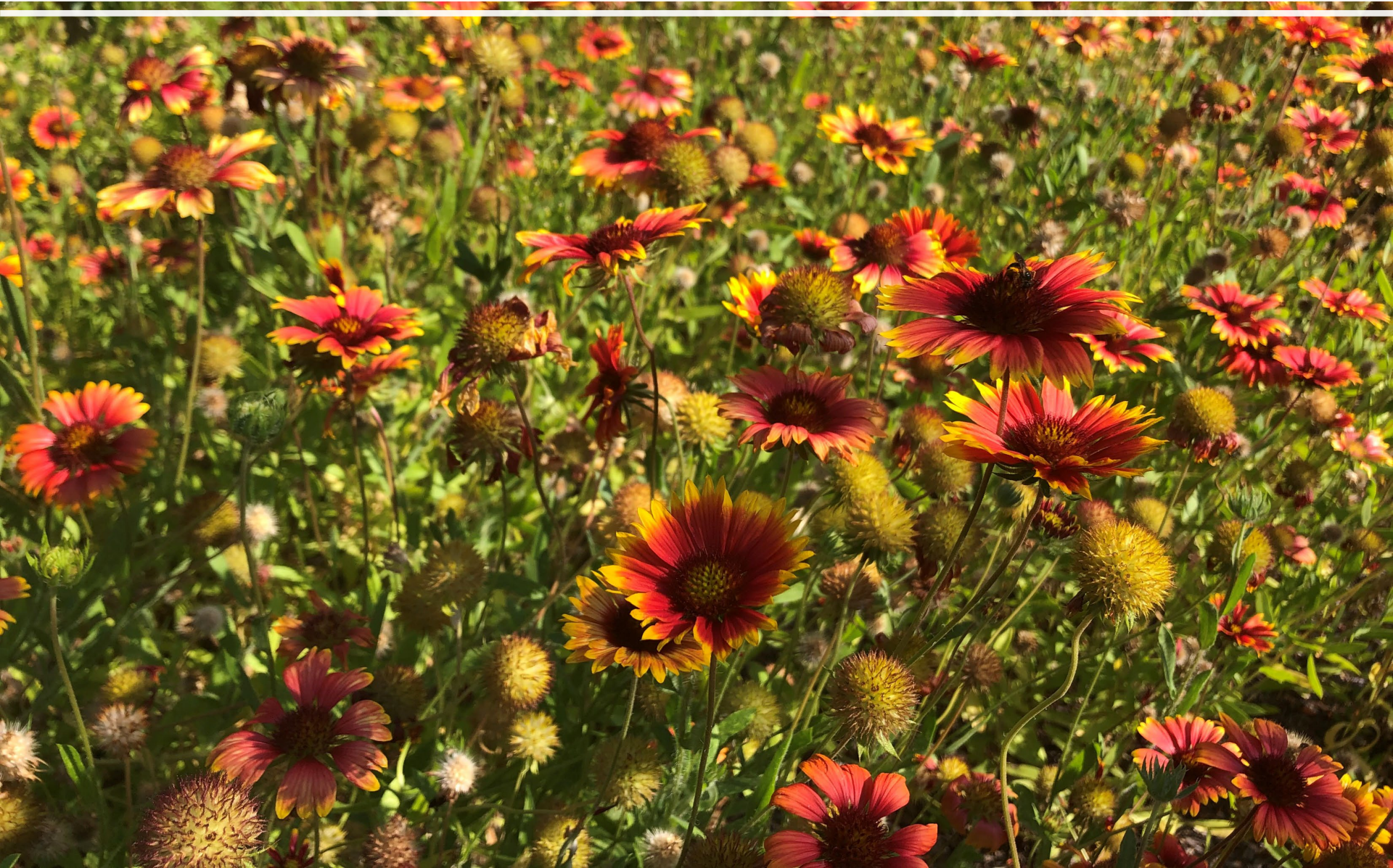


Ferns

- Southern Shield Fern or Southern Wood fern
 - *Thelypteris kunthii*
 - *Dryopteris ludoviciana*
- Sword Fern
 - *Nephrolepis biserrata*
 - *Nephrolepis exaltata*
 - Avoid invasive tuberous sword fern! *N. cordifolia*
- Bracken Fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*)
- Most are shade loving wanting partial – full shade



Native Flowers



Milkweed

Asclepias spp.

- There are 20+ species of milkweed in FL
- Select native milkweeds over the non-native Tropical milkweed
- Most common native sold as “Butterflyweed” (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
- Full sun, most need well-drained soils although pink swamp milkweed likes it wetter
- Self-seeding
- Nectar attracts hummingbirds and butterflies
 - Larval host of the Monarch and Queen butterflies



Scarlet Salvia

(*Salvia coccinea*)

- Perennial, native salvia with red, pink or white tubular flowers spring – fall
- Grows 3-4' tall, prune back when it becomes woody
- Highly attractive to hummingbirds and butterflies
- Reseeds readily
- Full to partial sun and well drained soils

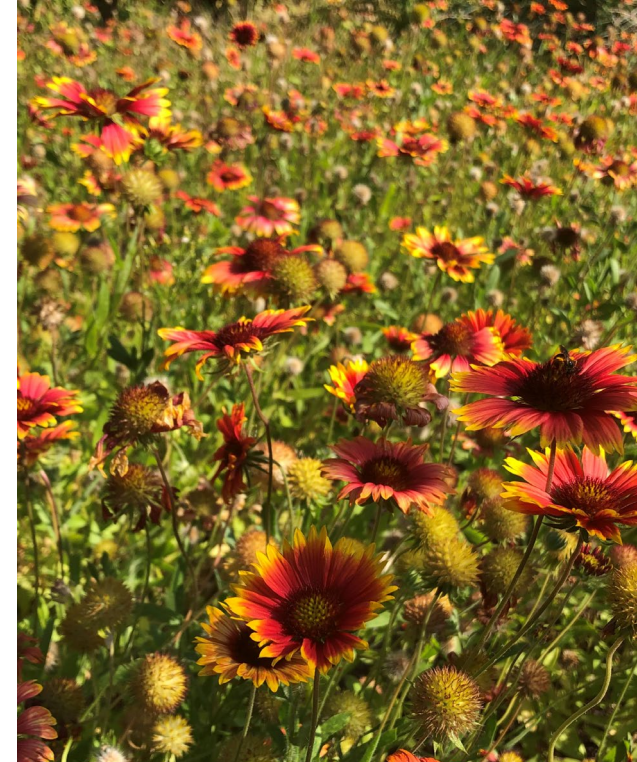




Helianthus tuberosus



Liatris spp.



Gaillardia pulchella

Wildflowers

- Endless varieties of native Florida wildflowers
- Most are annuals that reseed and need full sun
- Select wildflowers that bloom at different times of the year
- State wildflower is the *Coreopsis sp.*

Florida False Rosemary *Conradina canescens*

- In the mint family- has very fragrant foliage
- Semi-evergreen
- Flowers are highly attractive to pollinators
- Full sun and dry soils
- Rounded growth habit growing 2-3' tall x 4-6' wide
- *Conradina etonia* is a similar species growing 3-4' tall



Native Vines



Coral Honeysuckle

Lonicera sempervirens

-
- A slow grower that reaches 10-15' spread, full to partial sun
 - Evergreen in Central FL
 - Pinkish-red tubular flowers spring through summer flowers
 - Fruit provides food for wildlife
 - Attracts butterflies, hummingbirds, and other birds



Passionflower

Passiflora

spp.

- Many native species of passionflower (aka maypop)
- *Passiflora incarnata* has the showiest flower
- Aggressive twining vine can spread 15+
- Full sun
- White and purple flowers summer – fall with edible fruit
- Host plant for Gulf Fritillary, and Zebra Longwing butterflies



Native Shrubs



Fetterbush

(*Lyonia lucida*)

- Evergreen, flowering shrub
- Grows 3-5' tall
- Pink flowers bloom spring – summer provide nectar for pollinators
- Grows in variable conditions from wet and shady to dry and sunny



Coontie

Zamia integrifolia

- Florida's only native cycad
- Slowly grows 4' tall x 5' wide
- Evergreen and drought-tolerant once established
- Female plants produce large, orange fruits that are toxic to pets
- Sun or shade
- Planted as a specimen shrub or groundcover in shady places



Anise

- Excellent shrub for evergreen privacy hedge
- Grow 12-15'
- Florida anise (*Illicium floridanum*) for full to partial shade, moist soils – red flowers
- Yellow or Ocala Anise (*Illicium parviflorum*) better for sunnier and drier locations – yellow/green flowers



Oak Leaf Hydrangea

Hydrangea quercifolia

- Large, native, deciduous hydrangea
- Grows 6-10' tall x wide
- Shade-loving
- Large clusters of white flowers change to light pink or purple
- Highly attractive to pollinators
- Can spread from roots
- 'Pee wee' is a dwarf cultivar



Firebush

Hamelia patens

- Large, deciduous shrub grows ~8' tall x 6' wide on average
- Orange/red tubular flowers all year until freeze – highly attractive to butterflies and hummingbirds
- Foliage better in shade; flowers better in sun
- Produces black drupes popular with birds
- Dies back in freeze but returns
- Non-native Mexican or 'dwarf' firebush and many cultivated varieties like 'Calusa', 'Firefly', or 'Lime Sizzler'



Beautyberry

Callicarpa americana

- Large, deciduous shrub 6-8' tall and wide
- Partial sun to shade
- Pale pink blooms spring through fall – attractive to native bees and wasps
- Purple berries provide food for wildlife in fall & late winter
 - Edible good for jams or jellies



Hollies

Ilex spp.

- Many cultivars of native *Ilex* spp.
- Small to large shrub sizes
- Gallberry (*Ilex glabra*) has black fruits and good for moist areas
- Excellent, low-maintenance shrubs, full – partial sun
- Some produce berries but many male cultivars do not



Dwarf Palmetto

Sabal minor

-
- aka Bluestem palmetto
 - Small palm 4-9' tall
 - Partial sun and shade
 - White flowers highly attractive to pollinators
 - Black berries provide food for wildlife in the fall



Walter's Viburnum

Viburnum obovatum

- Evergreen shrub to small tree
 - The true native can grow up to 27'
- Many smaller cultivars that make excellent shrubs
 - Ex. 'Ms.Schiller's Delight' grows 3' – 5' tall and wide
- Covered in white flowers in spring followed by black fruit
 - Attract pollinators and wildlife
- Full – partial sun, high drought tolerance



Tripsacum dactyloides

Photo by Betty Wargo

Native Grasses



Fakahatchee

*Tripsacum
dactyloides*

- Aka Eastern or Florida gamagrass
- Grows 4 – 6' tall and wide ; Dwarf Fakahatchee (*Tripsacum floridanum*) only grows 2 – 3' tall and wide
- Full to partial sun, zones 8 – 11, prefers moist sites but can adapt to dry
- Great as a border or specimen plant, rain gardens
- Semi-evergreen (goes brown after hard freeze)



Sand Cordgrass

Spartina bakeri

- Evergreen clumping grass, grows 3 - 4' tall x 3 – 5' wide
- Zones 8a – 10b, prefers full sun, moist to average soils
- Excellent as border or specimen plant, rain gardens



Muhly Grass

*Muhlenbergia
capillaris*

- Clumping ornamental grass, grows 2-3' tall x 3' wide
- Purple / pink plumes in fall can grow up to 5' tall ; 'White Cloud' cultivar has white seedheads
- Full sun, very drought tolerant
- Greatest effect when planted en masse
- Grows brown/ dormant in winter



Lovegrass

- Elliott's (*Eragrostis elliottii*) blooms white, and Purple lovegrass (*Eragrostis spectabilis*) blooms purple in fall
- Small, perennial bunch grasses; grow 1' – 3' tall x 1 -2' wide
- Full sun, moist to average dry soils
- Go dormant in winter
- Best planted en masse



St. Augustine Grass

*Stenotaphrum
secundatum*

- Atlas of Florida Plants describes it as a “coastal pioneer species”
- Native to the Atlantic Gulf Coast, the West Indies and West Africa on beach coasts, salt and freshwater marshes and slowly moved inland to moist sites (Texas A&M)
- Now the most popular turfgrass species in FL
- Many improved cultivars available on the market
 - CitraBlue®
- Does require supplemental irrigation during high drought
- Moderate shade tolerance but prefers full sun



Native Trees



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Sabal Palm

Sabal palmetto

- Florida's state tree
- A hardy, low-maintenance tree that can grow up to 40'
- Fragrant white flowers in spring are highly attractive to pollinators
- Fruit is readily eaten by wildlife and many species live in the canopies of unpruned palms
- Full to partial sun



Southern Magnolia

Magnolia grandiflora

- Many native magnolias in Florida but this is the most popular in the landscape
- Can grow up to 80'+ but there are some dwarf cultivars
 - 'Little Gem' magnolia grows to about 30'
- Dark green evergreen leaves
 - Some cultivars have brown hair on underside of leaves
- Lovely fragrant flowers attractive to pollinators followed by fruit consumed by wildlife



Chickasaw and Flatwoods Plum

- Large shrubs to small trees grow 15-20' tall
- Full to partial sun
- Covered in lovely white flowers in spring before leaves flush out
- Highly attractive to pollinators
- Chickasaw plum (*Prunus angustifolia*) - small edible plums turn red to yellow – thorny branches
- Flatwoods plum (*Prunus umbellata*) has dark purple plums and thorny branches



Hickories

(*Carya spp.*)

-
- Several native hickory species to FL
 - Pignut Hickory (*Carya glabra*) usually 60-80' tall
 - Deciduous with brilliant yellow color in the fall
 - Fruit are popular with wildlife
 - Bark is attractive with a woven pattern
 - Full to partial sun and a lovely shade tree



Southern Red Cedar

Juniperus virginiana

- Fast growing, evergreen tree grows 30-45' tall
- Full sun to partial shade
- Variety of soils
- Provides food, cover, and nesting for birds and mammals
 - Bark used for nest making
 - Berries eaten by wildlife
- Berries used to flavor foods and gin



Hollies

Ilex spp.

- Yaupon Holly (*Ilex vomitoria*) weeping or standard, Dahoon (*Ilex cassine*), East Palatka Holly (*Ilex x attenuate*)
- Many other natives
- Full sun to partial shade
- Salt, drought, and shade tolerant
- Female plants only produce berries
- Fruit remains through winter
 - Attracts birds
- Yaupon holly leaves are used to make tea



Oak

Quercus spp.

- ~19 native oak spp. in FL
 - Avoid water and laurel oaks near structures
- Deciduous and semi-evergreen varieties
 - Some like Shumard or Swamp Chestnut Oak get fall color
- Full to partial sun
- Wide range of soil types
- Plant 20 feet+ from foundations
- Acorns provide winter forage for many species of wildlife



Resources

- Florida Association of Native Nurseries: <https://www.fann.org/>
- Florida Wildflower Cooperative: <http://www.floridawildflowers.com/>
- Florida Atlas of Native Plants : <https://florida.plantatlas.usf.edu/>
- University of Florida Gardening Solutions: <https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/>
- Florida-Friendly Landscaping Program: <https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/>
- UF/IFAS Marion County Master Gardeners Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MarionCountyMasterGardeners>
- The Hamelia Mess: <https://www.fann.org/info/plants/the-hamelia-mess/>
- Hollies at a Glance: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/MG021>

Questions?

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