

Gardens that function efficiently and esthetically for human use while benefitting the environment and supporting our wildlife

Sustainable Landscaping Principles

- Create systems rather than collections of plants with mulch
- Identify & remove invasive plants
 - [Invasive Plants and Better Alternatives](#)
 - [Learn More About Invasive Plants](#)
 - [Video: Invasive Plants & Native Alternatives](#)
- Reduce lawn & consider turf grass alternatives
 - [Lawn Alternatives](#), University of Maryland Extension.
 - [Lawn Alternatives](#), Maryland Department of Natural Resources
 - [“No Mow” Lawn Factsheet](#)
- Ideal landscape formula: 70% native plants, 30% benign non-native plants
- Select appropriate native plants
 - Plants for [Mid-Atlantic](#), MGNV/ [Northern Virginia](#), Plant NOVA Natives
 - Generally, opt for straight species over cultivars
 - [“Making Wise Plant Choices, Parts 3: Cultivars”](#) (Tallamy, Annie White)
 - [Mt. Cuba Center Plant Trials](#)
- Right Plant, Right Place (site appropriateness for sun, moisture, soil, pH, size)
- Importance of plants at each level for wildlife
- Native plants have deep underground roots
- Layers through time (seasons, years, changes of attitude & focus)

Establishing Layered Forest Edges

- Forest levels: canopy, understory, shrub layer, ground layer
- Acidic Oak-Hickory Community
- Mesic Mixed Hardwood Community
- Generalist woodland trees and shrubs
 - [Native Plant Compendium](#), Earth Sangha (*)
 - [Natural Ecological Communities of Northern Virginia](#)
 - [Natural Communities of Virginia](#), VA Dept. of Conservation & Recreation
 - [Video: Native Trees: Selecting, Planting and Transplanting](#)
- Maintain the leaf layer
 - [Video: Leave the Leaves and Other Beneficial Practices](#)



Planting Layers Around Lawn Trees

- Avoid invasive ground covers, or restrictive borders and paths
- Proper mulching techniques
- Adding shrubs, perennials, or ground covers
 - [Planting Under Trees](#), American Horticulture Society.
 - [Native Plants That Grow Under Pine Trees](#), Prairie Nursery.
 - [Video: Native Ground Covers for Sun and Shade](#)

Refreshing Foundation Plantings

- Replace non-native shrubs gradually to maintain critical cover for birds
- Retain natural form of plants, allow for mature size, and retain space next to building
- Native evergreen trees & shrubs
- Native deciduous shrubs
 - [Video: Overused Foundation Plants & Native Alternatives](#)
- Other plants (low-growing woody plants, ground covers, grasses & sedges)

Creating Layered Perennial Beds

- Site selection
 - Sunny location
 - Along sidewalk or driveway or set against a background
- Site preparation
 - [Video: Grass to Garden: Creating a New Garden Space](#)
- Planting concepts
 - Choose plants with various flower shapes and a range of bloom times
 - Aim to have at least three species blooming at any given time
 - Include top herbaceous keystone species (Goldenrods, Asters, Sunflowers)
 - Choose native plants representing multiple plant families for biodiversity
- Plant in layers, minimizing need for mulch
 - SEE: *Planting in a Post-Wild World* by Thomas Rainer & Claudia West
 - Structural/framework plants (bones, 10-15%)
 - Seasonal theme plants (color & texture, 25-40%)
 - Ground cover plants (living mulch, 50%) to control erosion & weeds
 - Filler plants (annual, biennials, short-lived species)
 - Plant in drifts (3'x3') of odd numbers for easier visibility & pollination



Rethinking Front Yards

- “Curb appeal” - meeting expectations of neighbors or HOAs
- Mown lawn and well-defined flower beds seen as intentional & neighborly
- “Cues to care” for native landscapes (Design principles & maintenance techniques)
 - Have a well-maintained streetscape
 - Define paths & trails (preferably permeable materials)
 - Use native foundation plantings to provide structure
 - Use walls and terracing to contain plantings
 - Provide support for plants
 - Use edging to frame beds
 - Use a high proportion of colorful flowers
 - Add indications of care for wildlife & property (signs, feeders, furniture, art)

Inspiration

- [Video: Sustainable Landscape Basics](#)
- [Video: Selecting Native Plants for Your Home Garden](#)
- MGNV: [Small space garden plan](#)
- Grow Native: [Native Landscape Plans](#)
- Wild Ones: [Native Garden Designs](#)
- Plant NOVA Natives: [Native plant landscaping design tips](#) & [“Ask the Expert” videos](#)

