Why focus on native plants?

To gain a sense of place. Just as a city has its signature skyline and monuments, a natural place is defined by its unique mixture of plants, animals, and landscapes. As part of this mixture, Virginia’s diverse native plants subtly help us know where we are.

To gain a sense of history. Native plants remind us of this landscape’s recent history; the grand hackberry at the eastern end of this section of the trail, for example, may have been growing there when smoke still rose from the chimney overlooking the area. They also speak of a history extending perhaps millions of years into the past, far beyond our ordinary measures of time. It is this ancient shared history that has produced the delicate interconnections of plants and animals in Virginia’s natural communities.

To gain new insight. Habitat loss and fragmentation are eroding biological diversity in Virginia, just as they are in the rest of the world. The unchecked spread of some non-native plants is threatening the very character of the state’s natural communities. Learning about the treasures of this naturalistic planting brings together some of the native plants of Virginia’s varied woodlands. These species were present in some part of what is now Virginia before European settlers arrived.

The canopy of high shade over this area is dominated by the large hackberries (Celtis occidentalis) along the wall. The massive stump at the end of the trail was one of the largest hackberry trees in the state before it was toppled by wind in early 2002. In time the oaks (Quercus spp.), ashes (Fraxinus spp.), and some of the other young trees will match the mature trees in size, extending the area where shade-loving plants can thrive.

Sheltered by the canopy are the shrubs and small trees of the understory, such as spicebush (Lindera benzoin) and redbud (Cercis canadensis). Beneath them, low-growing wildflowers, ferns, and grasses carpet the ground. Some of these understory and groundcover species need unbroken shade. Others flourish in sunnier areas at the edge of the woods, and some wildflowers complete their life cycles in bright sun before the trees leaf out. As shade returns, these spring ephemerals become dormant.

Some species growing here, such as flowering dogwood (Cornus florida), sweet pepperbush (Clethra alnifolia), and fringed bleeding heart (Dicentra eximia), are well known in gardens, often as cultivated varieties that differ from wild plants. Others, such as rue anemone (Anemonella thalictroides) and wreath goldenrod (Solidago caesia), are used mainly in wildflower plantings. Still others are natives most gardeners would weed out, like snakeroot (Sanicula gregaria) and kidney-leaved buttercup (Ranunculus abortivus), but here they are welcome.

Birds, insects, and other animals share this area, even in winter. Many feed on seeds, leaves, or nectar or use plants for shelter. In turn their activities benefit the plants by pollinating their flowers or dispersing their fruits and seeds.

All the plants in this section are nursery- or garden-propagated, except for some obtained through an authorized plant rescue at the Thompson wildlife management area, including the white trilliums (Trillium grandiflorum). A few species have appeared without being planted, such as the cream violets and common blue violets (Viola striata and V. papilionacea).

Follow the surfaced path to see the greatest variety of plants. A seating area midway offers a shady place to rest. The stone chimney above the limestone outcrops is a relic of the earliest structure on Blandy’s grounds. Its full history is unknown.

To protect fragile plants, please stay on the paths and keep dogs leashed, and for their own safety, keep children off the rocks. So others can enjoy the plants, do not pick flowers or other plant parts.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species and common name</th>
<th>Sp</th>
<th>Su</th>
<th>Fa</th>
<th>Wi</th>
<th>Description of key features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trees and Shrubs</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acer rubrum, red maple</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Red flowers, yellow to red fall color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acer saccharum, sugar maple</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>White flowers, purple summer fruits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amelanchier arborea, serviceberry, shadbloom</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Purple to black fruits important for wildlife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aonia arbutiloida, red chokeberry</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow, orange and red fall color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calycanthus floridus, Carolina allspice</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Scented maroon flowers, large seed pods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpinus caroliniana, American hornbeam</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Flowers in catkins, seeds in large bracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celtis occidentalis, hackberry</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pink-purple flowers, long pods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloots alnilu, sweet pepperbush</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Racemes of small white flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornus florida, flowering dogwood</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bell shaped flowers, four-winged seeds pods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chionanthus virginica, fringe tree</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>White flowers, yellow to red fall color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diapensia lapponica, persimmon</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td></td>
<td>Some evergreen, red or black fruits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fagus grandifolia, American beech</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow-orange edible fruits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frangula alnus, witch hazel</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow to orange at dawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fothergilla gardenii, dwarf fothergilla</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White, honey-scented flowers; yellow fall color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraxinus americana, white ash</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Puprlish to maroon fall color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halesia carolina, Carolina Silverbell</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bell shaped flowers, four-winged seeds pods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heteromeles arbutifolia, red chokeberry</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td></td>
<td>Red flowers, scarlet fruit, fall color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydrangea arborescens var. radiata, wild hydrangea</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White flowers in flat clusters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilex (3 species), hollies</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td></td>
<td>Some evergreen, red or black fruits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindera benzoin, spicebush</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yellow flowers, spicy foliage, red berries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquidambar styraciflua, sweet gum</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td>Bright fall foliage; seeds in prickly 'gumballs'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyasia sylvestris, black gum</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td></td>
<td>Glossy leaves, crimson fall color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxydendrum arboreum, sourwood</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>White, urn-shaped flowers; brilliant fall color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prunus serotina, white ash</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White flowers, seeds in samaras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perennials, ferns and grasses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adiantum pedatum, maidenhair fern</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td></td>
<td>Black stems, firely cut leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amsonia tabernaemontana, willow aster</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td>Steel-blue flowers, narrow seed pods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anemonella thalictroides, rue anemone</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Delicate white to pale pink flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquilegia canadensis, wild columbine</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Red and yellow spurred flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aristolochia serpentaria, Jack-in-the-pulpit</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td></td>
<td>Striped greenish 'pulpit', red flower clusters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asarum canadense, wild ginger</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maroon flowers on ground, heart-shaped leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aster (4 species), asters</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>White or blue flowers in panicles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asteraceae, false asphodel</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White flowers in large panicles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carex pensylvanica, Pennsylvania sedge</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Narrow grass-like leaves, tawny in fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelone glabra, turtlehead</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White, tubular flowers on spikes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chrysogonum virginianum, green-and-gold</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gold flowers on low, semi-evergreen foliage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cimicifuga racemosa, black snakeroot</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>White flowers on tall stalks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dendranthema, white dead nettle</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White flowers, dormant by early summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diervilla, fringed bleeding heart</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pink flower clusters hang above cut foliage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dryopteris marginalis, marginal wood fern</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td></td>
<td>Greenish-white flowers, seeds in samaras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geranium maculatum, wild geranium</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td></td>
<td>Red fall color, acorns for wildlife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentiana oriana, bowman's root</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lavender-pink flowers, 'traveler's' seed pods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hepatica acutiloba, sharp-lobed hepatica</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Small, white, star-shaped flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heuchera americana, alumroot</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White flowers, leaves with pointed lobes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris cristata, dwarf white clover</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Evergreen leaves mottled with silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeffersonia diphylla, twinleaf</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td>Fo</td>
<td></td>
<td>Blue to purple flowers, short dense foliage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobelia cardinalis, cardinal flower</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White flowers, stalked capsule, paired leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobelia cardinalis, cardinal flower</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intense red flowers, white centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mertensia virginica, Virginia bluebells</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td>Fr</td>
<td>Pink buds, blue flowers; dormant by summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oenothera fruticosa, sundrops</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bright yellow flowers, reddish green leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onoclea sensibilis, sensitive fern</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Separate stems topped with fern-like 'beads'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Osmunda claytoniana, interrupted fern | F  |    |    |    | Bright green leaves, fern-like 
| Phlox divaricata, wild phlox | F  |    |    |    | Lavender-blue, very fragrant flowers |
| Polygonum reptans, Jacob's ladder | F  |    |    |    | Pale blue, lightly fragrant flowers |
| Polygonum rubrum, red balsam | F  |    |    |    | Pale blue, lightly fragrant flowers |
| Sanguinaria canadensis, bloodroot | F  |    |    |    | White flowers, yellow centers, leathery leaves |
| Solidago virgaurea, northern river oats | F  |    |    |    | White flowers, creeping plant with flabby leaves |
| Smilax spp., false Solomon's seal | F  | Fr | Fr |    | White flowers in panicles, mottled red berries |
| Solidago virgaurea, northern river oats | F  | Fr | Fr |    | White flowers, yellow centers, leathery leaves |
| Stylophorum diphyllum, celandine poppy | F  | Fr |    |    | Yellow flower and fuzzy, green fruit |
| Thalictrum (2 species), meadow rue | F  |    |    |    | No petals, numerous stamens form flowers |
| Trillium grandiflorum, large flowered trillium | F  |    |    |    | White to deep pink, three petal flowers |
| Trillium sessile, toad trillium, sessile trillium | F  |    |    |    | Maroon flowers atop mottled leaves |
| Viola salsoloides, northwestern viola | F  |    |    |    | Arching stems, nodding seed heads |
| Viola tricolor, violet | F  | Fr | Fr |    | Yellow-green bell-shaped flowers |
| Viola tricolor, violet | F  | Fr | Fr |    | Blue, white and yellow flowers |
| Xanthorhiza simplicissima, shrubby yellowroot | F  | Fr |    |    | Yellow flowers, maroon fall color |

**KEY**

F - flowers, Fo - foliage Fr - fruits, seeds