

Cape Atlantic Conservation District



Native Plants for  
Wildlife Habitat  
Improvement in  
New Jersey's  
Coastal Plain  
Region

# Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat Improvement in New Jersey's Coastal Plain Region



The use of native plant species at a school, in a park, or around your home can be beneficial in many ways. Wildlife use plants for food and shelter, while you benefit from the beauty these plants and wildlife add to the landscape. The native plants are readily accepted by wildlife but also are adapted to our environmental conditions. They are adapted to our soil conditions, resistant to pests and once established require less maintenance.

This guide provides information for native plant species beneficial to wildlife of the Coastal Plain region of New Jersey. These plants can be used to help establish wildlife habitat areas on your property. The plants are listed in the categories of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants. In addition, environmental parameters for the use of these plants are identified in terms of soil moisture conditions, light preference and plant characteristics. Most of the plants in this guide are readily available from the nurseries and garden centers in this region.

Several factors should be considered when designing your wildlife habitat improvement. The first factor to consider is what kind of habitat you want to create. Certain plants are better suited for a bog or rain garden, while others thrive in an upland forest setting. So match the native plant environmental preferences to the soil moisture conditions of your site. Choosing plants that are well-adapted to your site's soil condition is important to their survival. An investigation of the soil on-site can be conducted first by using your County Soil Survey, and then by doing soil borings or soil pits. For aid in understanding the characteristics of soils, you may contact your Soil Conservation District.

The amount of sunshine or shade that your project area receives will affect the species of trees or shrubs that will survive over the long term. Certain species of trees and shrubs have adapted to living under the canopy of other trees; they are called understory plants. Over the short term too much shade will affect the amount of flowering and ultimately the amount of fruit that a plant can provide for wildlife. Consider shade from existing trees, and shade from buildings. Also plan for shade that will be created when newly planted trees mature.



Another major factor is how much space you have for your wildlife habitat improvement. You can expand the space for your wildlife habitat by layering canopy trees over understory trees over shrubs. This structured diversity will attract more species of wildlife. You should plan for the mature height and spread of a tree or shrub to avoid plants overcrowding. As with any landscape design, you want to design your site to create a terraced appearance, and to expand the habitat opportunities for wildlife by placing shrubs in front of trees and herbaceous plants in front of shrubs.

Native plants will flower various times of the year. You can choose plants that flower in your wildlife habitat area from March to September, attracting larger numbers of butterflies, pollinators and hummingbirds. Since plants flower at different times of the year, they bear fruit at different times of the year. Knowing when a plant will provide fruit will help you to provide wildlife food supply for a longer period during the year. Some plants will hold their berries or seeds that sustain migratory and overwintering species.

Lastly, when creating your landscape plan for your wildlife habitat improvement you will want to choose plants that are readily available. Try to purchase locally grown plants - they are adapted to local weather and site conditions of the coastal plain region. When purchasing your plants, check the scientific name of the plant to ensure that you are purchasing a native species and not a non-native cultivar.



This guide contains a list of plants that are adapted to the region, and are more pest tolerant, disease resistant and more drought tolerant than non-indigenous plants. It is not a complete list of the native plant species of New Jersey, but rather a list of those that may be best suited to help establish a wildlife habitat on your property.

The information in this guide has been collected from various local, state, and federal government agencies, as well as private organizations. All photographs are from the US Fish & Wildlife Service, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Cape Atlantic Conservation District.

# Trees

Name

Soil Moisture Conditions

Light

Height

Spread

Flower

Fruit

Fall Foliage



USDA NRCS

**Atlantic White Cedar  
(Chamaecyparis thyoides)**

*Moist to Wet*



60' - 80'

20' - 30'

March - April  
greenish-brown

bluish, cone-like  
maturing in fall

evergreen



USDA NRCS

**Eastern Red Cedar  
(Juniperus virginiana)**

*Dry to Moist*



40' - 50'

10' - 20'

March - April  
red to purple

July - March  
green to blue  
cone-like

evergreen



CACD

**American Holly\*  
(Ilex opaca)**

*Moist to Wet*



15' - 50'

18' - 40'

May - June  
small white

Oct - March  
red berry

evergreen



CACD

**Eastern White Pine  
(Pinus strobus)**

*Dry to Moist*



75' - 100'

50' - 75'

May  
yellow

August - Oct  
light brown cone

evergreen



USDA NRCS

**Pitch Pine  
(Pinus rigida)**

*Dry to Wet*



50' - 60'

40' - 50'

May  
small red to  
purple

brown cone  
maturing in fall

evergreen



USDA NRCS

**Virginia Pine  
(Pinus virginiana)**

*Dry to Moist*



30' - 40'

20' - 30'

April  
yellow

reddish-brown  
cone maturing in  
two years in Oct

evergreen

\*understory species

# Trees



USDA NRCS

**Black Gum  
(*Nyssa sylvatica*)**

*Dry to Wet*



30' - 75'

20' - 50'

April - June  
greenish-white

Sept - Oct  
blue-black fleshy  
fruit

red



USDA NRCS

**Flowering Dogwood\*  
(*Cornus florida*)**

*Dry to Moist*



20' - 50'

20' - 50'

April - May  
large white

Sept - Dec  
red to orange  
berry

scarlet red



USDA NRCS

**Gray Birch  
(*Betula populifolia*)**

*Dry to Moist*



20' - 40'

15' - 30'

April - May  
green to brown  
catkin

Sept - Oct  
small winged  
nutlet

yellow



USDA NRCS

**Persimmon  
(*Diospyros virginiana*)**

*Dry to Wet*



30' - 60'

20' - 30'

May - June  
small yellow

Sept - Nov  
yellowish to pale  
orange large  
berry

yellow-green  
or reddish  
purple



USDA NRCS

**Red Maple  
(*Acer rubrum*)**

*Dry to Wet*



40' - 75'

25' - 50'

March  
yellow tinted to  
bright red

April  
red wing-shaped  
samara

orange to red



USDA NRCS

**Sassafras  
(*Sassafras albidum*)**

*Dry to Moist*



20' - 50'

20' - 30'

April  
yellow green

Sept - Oct  
dark blue  
berry-like

yellow to  
crimson



USDA NRCS

**Shadbush,  
Serviceberry\*  
(*Amelanchier  
canadensis*)**

*Moist to Wet*



35' - 50'

35' - 50'

April - May  
small white

June - July  
red to purple

orange to red



US F&WS

**Sweetbay Magnolia\*  
(*Magnolia virginiana*)**

*Moist to Wet*



12' - 30'

12' - 30'






May - July  
white to cream

Sept - Oct  
red berry

yellow  
(semi-  
evergreen)

\*understory species

# Trees

	Name	Soil Moisture Conditions	Light	Height	Spread	Flower	Fruit	Fall Foliage
	<b>Chestnut Oak</b> ( <i>Quercus prinus</i> )	<i>Dry</i>	☉ ☿	40' - 80'	40' - 60'	May - June yellowish	Sept - Oct yellow-green acorn	yellow-orange
	<b>Northern Red Oak</b> ( <i>Quercus rubra</i> )	<i>Dry to Moist</i>	☉ ☿	70' - 90'	40' - 50'	May light green catkins	October green to brown acorn	red to reddish-brown
	<b>Southern Red Oak</b> ( <i>Quercus falcata</i> )	<i>Dry to Moist</i>	☉	60' - 80'	50'	April - May yellowish-green	October orange brown acorn	orange brown
	<b>White Oak</b> ( <i>Quercus alba</i> )	<i>Dry to Moist</i>	☉ ☿	80' - 100'	80' - 100'	April - May yellow	October chestnut brown acorn	brown to reddish-brown
	<b>Willow Oak</b> ( <i>Quercus phellos</i> )	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☿	60' - 80'	40' - 60'	April - May yellow	Aug - Oct greenish-brown acorn	yellow to orange-red

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# Shrubs



US F&WS

**Arrowwood Viburnum**  
(*Viburnum dentatum*)

*Dry to Wet*



10' - 15'

6' - 12'

May - June  
white

Sept - Nov  
blue to black  
berry

reddish-purple



USDA NRCS

**American Cranberrybush**  
(*Viburnum trilobum*)

*Moist*



8' - 12'

8' - 12'

early June  
white

September  
red glossy

red to purple



US F&WS

**Cranberry**  
(*Vaccinium macrocarpon*)

*Wet*



.5" - 1"

3' - 3'

June - July  
white to pink

Sept - Nov  
red berry

purple to red



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District

**Highbush Blueberry**  
(*Vaccinium corymbosum*)

*Dry to Wet*



6' - 12'

6' - 12'

April - June  
white

July - Aug  
blue berry

red



US F&WS

**Lowbush Blueberry**  
(*Vaccinium angustifolium*)

*Dry to Moist*



1' - 2'

1' - 2'

May - June  
white

July - Aug  
blue berry

red



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**Inkberry Holly**  
(*Ilex glabra*)

*Dry to Wet*



6' - 10'

6' - 10'

May - June  
small white

Sept - March  
black berry

evergreen



USDA NRCS

**Winterberry Holly**  
(*Ilex verticillata*)

*Moist to Wet*



6' - 10'

4' - 6'

early June  
small white

Oct - Dec  
bright red  
and glossy

yellow-green  
with purple  
tinges



# Shrubs



	Name	Soil Moisture Conditions	Light	Height	Spread	Flower	Fruit	Fall Foliage
USDA NRCS	<b>Beach Plum</b> ( <i>Prunus maritima</i> )	<i>Dry to Moist, Sandy Salt Tolerant</i>	☉	4' - 7'	8' - 10'	April - June white	Aug - Sept purplish-black to red to yellow fleshy	yellow to gold
RCE	<b>Bearberry</b> ( <i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i> )	<i>Dry sandy</i>	☉ ☀	2" - 8"	2' - 6'	April - May white or pinkish	July - March bright red drupe	evergreen
US F&WS	<b>Mountain Laurel</b> ( <i>Kalmia latifolia</i> )	<i>Dry to Wet</i>	☉ ☀ ☛	12' - 20'	12' - 20'	May - July white to pink	May - June brown capsules	evergreen
USDA NRCS	<b>Northern Bayberry</b> ( <i>Morella pensylvanica</i> )	<i>Dry to Wet Salt Tolerant</i>	☉ ☀	5' - 10'	5' - 10'	March - April small yellow-green	Sept - April waxy white bluish berry	bronze
US F&WS	<b>Silky Dogwood</b> ( <i>Cornus amomum</i> )	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☀	6' - 12'	6' - 12'	May - June white	August blue berry	orange-red to purple
US F&WS	<b>Swamp Azalea</b> ( <i>Rhododendron viscosum</i> )	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☀	6' - 10'	6' - 12'	May - Aug white to pink	Aug - March brown capsules	yellow-orange to purple
US F&WS	<b>Sweet Pepperbush</b> ( <i>Clethra ainifolia</i> )	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☀	5' - 8'	4' - 6'	July - Aug numerous small white	Sept - Feb brown capsules	yellow-green to golden brown
US F&WS	<b>Witch-hazel</b> ( <i>Hamamelis virginiana</i> )	<i>Dry to Moist</i>	☀ ☛	15' - 30'	20' - 30'	Sept - Dec small yellow	Oct - Nov tan brown capsules	yellow

## Herbaceous Plants & Grasses



USDA NRCS

**Bee Balm**  
(*Monarda didyma*)

**Soil Moisture Conditions**

*Moist to Wet*

**Light**



**Plant Size**

2' - 5'

**Flower**

July - Sept  
red tufts

**Notes**

minty aroma



USDA NRCS

**Big Bluestem**  
(*Andropogon gerardii*)

*Dry to Moist*



2' - 6.5'

June - Sept  
red, blue, brown, &  
yellow

moderate salt  
tolerance



USDA NRCS

**Black-eyed Susan**  
(*Rudbeckia hirta*)

*Dry to Moist*



1' - 3.5'

June - Oct  
yellow to orange with  
black eye

most common  
American wildflower



USDA NRCS

**Blue Lobelia**  
(*Lobelia siphilitica*)

*Moist to Wet*



1' - 5'

Aug - Oct  
blue to violet  
fluffy appearance

flowers crowded on  
upper stem



USDA NRCS

**Blue Mistflower**  
(*Conoclinium coelestinum*)

*Dry to Wet*



1' - 3.5'

July - Oct  
blue to purple

can spread quickly



USDA NRCS

**Bluejoint Reedgrass**  
(*Calamagrostis canadensis*)

*Moist to Wet*



1.5' - 5'  
0.5'-1' spread

June - Aug  
purple/ tan to  
blue/green

attracts waterfowl



USDA NRCS

**Boneset**  
(*Eupatorium perfoliatum*)

*Moist to Wet*










1' - 5'

July - Oct  
white  
small, fuzzy clusters

popular herb

## Herbaceous Plants & Grasses

	Name	Soil Moisture Conditions	Light	Plant Size	Flower	Notes
	<b>Brachen Fern</b> ( <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> )	<i>Dry to Wet</i>	☉ ☾	1.5' - 6'	June - Aug green	reproduction by spores
	<b>Broom Sedge</b> ( <i>Andropogon virginicus</i> )	<i>Dry to Wet</i>	☉	1' - 3'	Aug - Nov yellow to reddish brown	not recommended to mix with cool season grasses
	<b>Butterfly Weed</b> ( <i>Asclepias tuberosa</i> )	<i>Dry to moist</i>	☉ ☾	1' - 3'	May - July yellow to orange	transplant seedlings, not taproot easy to grow from seeds
	<b>Cardinal Flower</b> ( <i>Lobelia cardinalis</i> )	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☾	2' - 4' 0.5'-1' spread	July - Oct red	long bloom time but must be reseeded
	<b>Cinnamon Fern</b> ( <i>Osmunda cinnamomea</i> )	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☾ ●	2' - 5'	March - May reddish brown wooly appearance	produces separate fertile & sterile fronds
	<b>Clematis</b> ( <i>Clematis virginiana</i> )	<i>Dry to Moist</i>	☉ ☾ ●	6' - 20' 0.5'-1' spread	July - Sept white small flower	fragrant flowers
	<b>Foxglove Beard Tongue</b> ( <i>Penstemon digitalis</i> )	<i>Dry to moist</i>	☉ ☾	2' - 5'	June - Aug white to light purple	tubular flower with a tuff of small hairs along the stamen

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## Herbaceous Plants & Grasses

	Name	Soil Moisture Conditions	Light	Plant Size	Flower	Notes
	<b>Fox Sedge</b> ( <i>Carex vulpinoidea</i> )	<i>Wet</i>	☉ ☐	0.5' - 3.5'	June - Aug green	high wildlife value
	<b>Fragrant Waterlily</b> ( <i>Nymphaea odorata</i> )	<i>Wet (Emergent)</i>	☉	1' - 4'	June - Sept white to pink floating plant	flowers close at night needs a pond at least 1 foot deep
	<b>Golden Heather</b> ( <i>Hudsonia ericoides</i> )	<i>Dry</i>	☉	4" - 8" 3' spread	May - July yellow	low growing, mat forming plant
	<b>Jewelweed</b> ( <i>Impatiens capensis</i> )	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☐ ☐	3' - 5'	July - Oct yellow to orange	stem juice is a remedy for poison ivy itching
	<b>Little Bluestem</b> ( <i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i> )	<i>Dry</i>	☉	2' - 4'	June - Dec green to reddish tan	good ornamental grass
	<b>New England Aster</b> ( <i>Aster novae-angliae</i> )	<i>Moist</i>	☉ ☐	1' - 6' 2'-3' spread	Aug - Oct white to purple	pinching may help keep plant compact
	<b>New York Aster</b> ( <i>Aster novi-belgii</i> )	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☐	1' - 4.5' 1'-2.5' spread	July - Oct blue to violet	pinching may help keep plant compact

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## Herbaceous Plants & Grasses



USDA NRCS

**New York Ironweed  
(Vernonia noveboracensis)**

**Soil Moisture  
Conditions**

*Moist to Wet*

**Light**



**Plant Size**

3.5' - 8'

**Flower**

Aug - Oct  
reddish-purple  
showy flower

**Notes**

upright form adds  
structure to garden



USDA NRCS

**Hairy Beard Tongue  
(Penstemon hirsutus)**

*Moist*



1' - 3'

June - July  
pink to purple

trumpet shape flower  
with white lips



USDA NRCS

**Pitcher Plant  
(Sarracenia purpurea)**

*Wet*



0.5' - 2'

May - Aug  
red to purple

carnivorous  
endangered- should  
not take from wild



US F&WS

**Poverty Grass  
(Danthonia spicata)**

*Dry to Moist*



0.5' - 2'

May - July  
green

thrives in infertile  
soils



US F&WS

**Prickly Pear Cactus  
(Opuntia humifusa)**

*Dry*



0.5' - 1'

June - July  
yellow

edible fruit



USDA NRCS

**Purple Coneflower  
(Echinacea purpurea)**

*Dry to Moist*



2' - 5'

April - Sept  
lavender to purple

popular herb  
good butterfly plant



USDA NRCS

**Rose coreopsis  
(Coreopsis rosea)**

*Dry to Moist*










1' - 2'  
4' spread

July - Sept  
white to pink

deer resistant - needs  
deadheading to  
maintain growth

## Herbaceous Plants & Grasses

	Name	Soil Moisture Conditions	Light	Plant Size	Flower	Notes
	<b>Seaside Goldenrod</b> ( <i>Solidago sempervirens</i> )	<i>Dry to Moist</i>	☉ ☐	1' - 6.5'	July - Nov yellow	thrives in coastal regions
	<b>Sensitive Fern</b> ( <i>Onoclea sensibilis</i> )	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☐ ●	1' - 3.5'	May green	reproduction by spores easily transplanted
	<b>Shallow Sedge</b> ( <i>Carex lurida</i> )	<i>Wet</i>	☉ ☐	1' - 3.5'	May - Oct light green	seeds have interesting appearance
	<b>Slender Blue Flag</b> ( <i>Iris prismatica</i> )	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☐	1' - 3'	May - June blue to purple	flower color great contrast to greens and yellows
	<b>Soft Rush</b> ( <i>Juncus effusus</i> )	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☐	1' - 4'	June - Sept greenish brown	can be found in fresh & saltwater areas
	<b>Spotted Joe-Pye-Weed</b> ( <i>Eupatorium maculatum</i> )	<i>Moist</i>	☉ ☐	2' - 6.5' 3' spread	July - Sept pale to dark purple	purple spotted stem
	<b>Spotted Horsemint</b> ( <i>Monarda punctata</i> )	<i>Dry</i>	☉	0.5' - 3.5'	June - Oct yellow to purple	minty aroma

US F&WS

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## Herbaceous Plants & Grasses

	Name	Soil Moisture Conditions	Light	Plant Size	Flower	Notes
	<b>Sundew</b> ( <i>Drosera filiformis</i> )	<i>Wet</i>	☉	3" - 10"	June - Sept lavender to rose	<b>carnivorous</b> endangered- should not take from wild
	<b>Swamp Milkweed</b> ( <i>Asclepias incarnata</i> )	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☀	4' - 5' 2'-3' spread	May - June pink to red	primary species for monarch butterflies
	<b>Switchgrass</b> ( <i>Panicum virgatum</i> )	<i>Dry to Wet</i>	☉ ☀	3' - 6'	July - Oct green to brown to rose	good erosion control
	<b>Tall Coneflower</b> ( <i>Rudbeckia laciniata</i> )	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉ ☀	1.5' - 10'	July - Sept yellow with green eye	large spacing between petals
	<b>Wild Bergmont</b> ( <i>Monarda fistulosa</i> )	<i>Dry to Moist</i>	☉ ☀	1.5' - 5'	June - Sept pink to purple	minty aroma
	<b>Wild Columbine</b> ( <i>Aquilegia canadensis</i> )	<i>Dry to Moist</i>	☉ ☀	0.5' - 3'	April - July red to yellow	showy flowers
	<b>Woolgrass</b> ( <i>Scirpus cyperinus</i> )	<i>Moist to Wet</i>	☉	4' - 5'	Aug - Sept green to brown	high wildlife value
	<b>Yellow Spatterdock</b> ( <i>Nuphar lutea</i> )	<i>Wet (Emergent)</i>	☉ ☀	1' - 1.5'	May - Oct yellow floating plant	common for show in water gardens



# **CAPE ATLANTIC CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

**For more information about  
our Wildlife Habitat Improvements Program,  
or other District programs  
please contact us at:**

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[www.capeatlantic.org](http://www.capeatlantic.org)**