

January 2020 Update

Another short article to share – At the bottom of this page, please see the short article about planting for winter interest and share it as widely as possible.

HOAs and Condo Associations – We are repeating our very successful “Sustainable Solutions to Landscaping Headaches” symposium on Friday, March 6. All are welcome – be sure to invite all the decision makers from your community, such as the Board members, Architectural Review Board, professional managers, etc. [Details and registration here](#). Our previous events were attended by nearly 200 people representing over 60 community associations, but we still have hundreds to go!

May we borrow your pop-up canopy tent? Every once in a while we get invited to outdoor events to set up a booth and have to risk getting rained on. It would help us a lot if we knew several people scattered around Northern Virginia who would allow a volunteer to borrow their tent for the day. Email plantnovanatives@gmail.com.

Crowd-sourcing deer-resistance information – Help us make our data more specific to Northern Virginia by filling out the deer survey on our [web page](#), which includes a list of the deer resistance of native plants. This information is also in our [plant search app](#).

Trees for your Valentine?

Honor your friends and family members with tree seedlings to be planted in their name in Fairfax County. Once planted, the recipients will be able to see their location on a map. All proceeds go to support the Plant NOVA Natives outreach. www.reforestfairfax.com/

Events in need of volunteers – To staff all the events to which we are invited in 2020, we’ll need around thirty of you to spend a few hours at tables telling people about why native plants are such a good idea. No experience necessary! [Find events and sign up here](#). Many more opportunities will be added as we learn about them.

Virginia Native Plant Society – Potowmack Chapter Listserv – All are welcome to join this group to share information and ideas about native plants. To view the Potowmack messages archives, other content and to join the group, visit <https://vnps.groups.io/g/potowmack>. Or just send a blank email to potowmack+subscribe@vnps.groups.io.

New Facebook Group for Community Associations – We have added a public Facebook Group for people who would like to share ideas and questions about helping our community associations to become habitat-friendly. Look it up under “Plant NOVA Natives Community Associations Group.” We also have a group for faith communities called “Sowing Seeds of Stewardship (NOVA).”

Upcoming educational events:

- Wednesday, February 5, 7pm – 9 pm. **Amaze Your Friends and Impress your HOA with Native Plants.** Ashburn Library. [Details here](#).
- Saturday, February 8, 9 am to 3 pm - **Stop Mowing, Start Growing** – Native plant symposium for individuals and HOAs. Northern Virginia Community College, Woodbridge. [Register here](#).
- Sunday, February 23, 3-5pm - Manassas Park Community Center. [Doug Tallamy lecture](#).

- Friday, March 6, 9:15 am – 1 pm - **“Sustainable Solutions to Landscaping Headaches”** symposium for HOAs and Condo associations. Northern Virginia Community College – Annandale campus. [Register here.](#)
- Saturday, March 21 **Let’s Get Growing** symposium, Leesburg. [Registration and details here.](#)

Next Steering Committee meeting – All are welcome! Tuesday March 10 at 10:30 am (but please always check our [Event Calendar](#) in case there is a change.)

This month’s newsletter article to share – Please distribute as widely as possible. Use [this link](#) for social media.

Inside Out Gardens

Before we turn our thoughts to spring, let us take this opportunity to plan for next year’s long stretch of cold and gray. Does your landscape give you pleasure in the winter, as you sit inside looking out? Or is it only designed for curb appeal, with the plants crammed up against the foundation so that all you see from your window is the lawn and the street? Or perhaps the shrubs that were installed with the house are now overgrown and blocking your view altogether. A little rearranging can give you both curb appeal and a vibrant vista from your breakfast table or living room.

The first thing to consider is that movement brings a landscape to life. That can be provided by wind bending the grasses but most importantly by birds and other critters that are making use of your yard. A bird feeder can help you obtain that experience, but to actually support the wildlife, you need to provide them with the plants they need for shelter and food for both themselves and their babies. With rare exceptions, baby songbirds cannot eat seeds – they require insects, which themselves require the plants with which they evolved. In other words, to support life, your yard needs native plants.

If you take out any overgrown shrubs and plant new ones fifteen or twenty feet away from the window, from the inside the effect can be as if you added on a room to your house. Native shrubs can be arranged into a living backdrop where birds entertain you as they eat and shelter. Winterberry, Chokeberry and Elderberry are examples of shrubs that provide colorful berries to feed the birds. Multi-stemmed Serviceberries, with their lovely white flowers followed by berries that are also edible to humans, provide a place for birds to sit while they eat the seeds from your feeder. Native Heucheras and evergreen native ferns and sedges can fill the lower levels, which are also the perfect place to include some small shade-loving species that might get lost in a flower garden bed. Partridgeberry, for example, lies flat on the ground and has adorable red berries from November to January. Not as tiny but still quite small, the spring ephemerals start to emerge just when you need relief from winter.

Spring ephemerals are shade plants that emerge and quickly flower in late winter and spring and then fade away once the trees leaf out. If you plant them in the woods, you will be mimicking nature, but you may miss the whole show. How often do you walk in your woods in cold or rainy weather? On the other hand, if you also tuck them under your deciduous shrubs out front where you can spot these treasures from your window or as you walk by on the way to your car, you can enjoy them the same way we appreciate snow drops, crocuses and daffodils as they emerge in succession. One of the earliest harbingers of spring is Round-lobed Hepatica, whose cute three-lobed leaves peek out in March to be followed by pale purple flowers. Another plant with intriguing leaves is Bloodroot, which starts to flower

by late March, around the time that the pink and white flowers of Virginia Spring Beauty begin their long bloom period, providing an important source of nectar to bees as they first awaken. The blossoms of Virginia Bluebells may occasionally start to appear that early as well. A whole troop of other ephemerals burst forth in April. You can find details about [spring ephemerals](#) and other native plants on the Plant NOVA Natives website, as well as information about where to buy them.



Plant NOVA Natives is a joint marketing campaign of over a hundred private, public, and non-profit organizations, and hundreds of individuals. Our mission is to educate the community and to promote the benefits to water quality and natural habitat of planting beautiful Northern Virginia natives, through the efforts of committed volunteers using multimedia outreach and events, and by working with local landscapers and sellers of native plants. All are welcome to participate in this collective action movement.