

NATIVE PLANTS IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE

Native plants help create a wildlife-friendly landscape that contributes four components to the local ecosystem by 1. supporting a diverse population of pollinators, 2. contributing to the greater food web, 3. sequestering carbon, and 4. managing and protecting watersheds. It does this by providing wildlife with food, cover, places to raise young and water.

LEARNING MORE

Wild Ones is a national organization promoting native plants, and it has a Middle Tennessee chapter with a native plant sale in the spring. There are some Wild Ones videos that you can easily access through your membership. (If you look for “wild ones” on YouTube you’re likely to find some really “wild” videos not related to native plants! Beware!) Here is one called the Top 10 Things New Native Plant Gardeners Need to Know that is particularly useful for beginners.

The Tennessee Native Plant Society is “conserving and celebrating natives through education” and has seminars, a conference, outings, and a page of numerous links to other websites of interest.

The Tennessee Invasive Plant Council has much information as well as a brochure called Invasive Plant Primer for the Home Landscape: Identify, Control, Replant.

The National Wildlife Federation’s website has information on native plants. The group also has eight Wildlife Guide apps to help you identify trees, mushrooms, butterflies, etc. And they sell and ship native plants specific to our area.

If you want information about invasive species, you can learn more at the USDA National Invasive Species Information Center site. However, this is focused on all invasive species, not just plants, so here’s a list of Tennessee invasive plant species that really should not be sold because of their invasiveness (but which unfortunately can still be found in many plant nurseries).

The Pollinator Partnership has a variety of information, including this list of the seven things you can do to help.

The tagline for Two Thirds for the Birds is “Healthy Landscapes, Healthy Birds, Healthy Us.” The group’s idea is that if we could plant even half of the 40 million acres of lawn with two-thirds native plants and keep them pesticide-free, we could turn around the loss of nearly 3 billion birds since the 1970s.

A national native plants resource is the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. There is a way to find out native plant suppliers in our area, but you will have to fill in the blanks, so it’s done for you at this link, which will tell you nurseries, seed companies,

landscape professionals and environmental consultants in the Nashville area. (They list the nursery Nashville Natives, but that website doesn't look like it's been updated for several years.)

The Audubon Society has a section on their website to help you learn which native plants are best in your area to feed the birds.

LOCAL RESOURCES

Many of Middle Tennessee's environmental nonprofits have garden-related programs and/or information.

The Cumberland River Compact has a rain garden manual as well as an annual Plant a Tree day, with trees given away at no cost.

Tennessee Environmental Council has the Tennessee Pollinator Program: Generate Some Buzz.

Tennessee Wildlife Federation offers Create and Certify Your Own Wildlife Habitat.

Nashville Public Library has a variety of presentations on plants and gardening, some of which focus on native plants. They also offer free seeds, although they hope you'll save and return your seeds at the end of the season.

BOOKS/ARTICLES

Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard by Douglas W. Tallamy is often cited, and it's highly recommended. You can also watch a presentation he gave to the national Wild Ones organization, which takes about 70 minutes to watch (but that's less time than reading the book). His idea is that we create a Homegrown National Park.

This online article cites Tallamy and explains why native plants are important.

Mason Bee Revolution: How the Hardest Working Bee Can Save the World One Backyard at a Time by Dave Hunter and Jill Lightner is an excellent book. Dave Hunter has a business called Crown Bees, offering products and information. The book is available at the library, or you can buy it at <https://crownbees.com>

Wildflowers of Tennessee, the Ohio Valley and the Southern Appalachians is the Official Field Guide of the Tennessee Native Plant Society. It is available at local book stores, and was available at the Wood Thrush Shop.

Native Plants of Tennessee: A Book of Lists was produced by the Tennessee Federation of Garden Clubs. There are no pictures, literally just lists, but it might be a good supplement to other guidebooks.

Books by B. Eugene Wofford, Lawrence Newcomb, and Margaret McKenny/Roger Tory Peterson have been recommended.

BLOGS

Local Joanna Brichetto has an occasional blog called Sidewalk Nature that is informative and entertaining.

Lee Reich has books, blog, syndicated gardening column.

SALES/EVENTS

Trails & Trilliums in Monteagle is an annual event in April that is a fundraiser for the Friends of South Cumberland Parks. There are many opportunities to learn, as well as native plants for sale.

Cheekwood has a native plants sale, usually in April.

The Middle Tennessee chapter of Wild Ones has an annual plant sale at Owl's Hill Nature Sanctuary in Brentwood.

Every year in mid-June, Pollinator Week is highlighted by the Pollinator Partnership and would be a time to keep a look-out for local events.

There is a Weed Wrangle each year, usually in March. The Weed Wrangle project evidently started with individual Garden Club of America clubs, but now other groups have added venues. Look for your local garden club; Cheekwood, TennGreen, Cedars of Lebanon State Park, and The Land Trust for Tennessee are other groups that have hosted Weed Wrangles. Hands On Nashville may offer a list of Weed Wrangles as the date approaches.

NATIVE PLANT SELLERS

One of the reasons for buying from a native plant seller is to be sure your plant hasn't been treated with chemicals.

GroWild. All visits by appointment only. 7190 Hill Hughes Road, Fairview, TN 37062. 615.799.1910

Nashville Foodscapes has been recommended by multiple CCC women. 5511
Clarksville Pike, Joelton, TN 37080.

APPS FOR YOUR PHONE

These apps will help you identify the plant you're seeing. Below you can link to their website; to get the app, you may need to go through your phone's app store.

iNature is a free joint initiative of the California Academy of Sciences and the National Geographic Society. It is a "community of naturalists," and notes that every observation can contribute to biodiversity science.

PlantSnap is a free "plant expert at your fingertips. Identify plants, flowers, cacti, succulents and mushrooms in second with the click of a button on your mobile device," and it invites you to "explore and share your observations from the natural world."

PictureThis is not free and helps you identify plants with a photo, offers automatic problem diagnosis, has detailed plant care guides and offers toxic plant identification.

Compiled by Cindy Kershner