

Native Ground Covers

The attractive flowers and foliage of these natives provide nectar, pollen, food and cover for wildlife. Use them for edgings and to replace the foliage of dormant spring ephemerals. They form a living or green mulch when used around taller plants.

Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*) 4-8"; heart-shaped leaves form dense ground cover; maroon flowers in early spring.

Pennsylvania Sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*) 6-12", very fine grass-like foliage; average soil and moisture; adapts to dry shade. Sedges with broader leaves such as **Seersucker** (*C. plantaginea*) and **Creeping** (*C. laxiculmis*) provide texture and different shades of green.

Green-and-gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*) 4-8"; clumping and creeping forms with bright yellow flowers early spring and into summer if soil stays moist.

Dwarf Crested Iris (*Iris cristata*) 3-8"; blue flowers late April into May; dainty sword-shaped foliage; needs bright filtered shade and slightly moist soil. Also a white form.

Robin's Plantain (*Erigeron pulchellus*, 6-12", ground-hugging foliage with white, daily-like flowers on wiry stems in spring; good in dry, poor soil.

Partridge-berry (*Mitchella repens*) 2-4"; small, leathery evergreen leaves on trailing stems; pinkish white flowers in May and bright red berries in winter.

***Creeping Phlox** (*Phlox stolonifera*) 2-8"; ground-hugging foliage is almost evergreen; pinkish-lavender flowers in spring; also blue-, white- and purple-flowered forms.

Wild Stonecrop (*Sedum ternatum*) 2-6"; fleshy-leaved, semi-evergreen trailer sends up 4-6" dainty white flowering stalks in May. Needs good drainage.

Foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*) 6-12"; fluffy white flowers late April into May; cultivars of this form plus a clumping form are available.

***Barren Strawberry** (*Waldsteinia fragarioides*) 3-6"; yellow flowers in early spring; spreads by stolons.

Plant Sources

A list of mail order and local native plant nurseries is available from:

Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS)
Blandy Experimental Farm
400 Blandy Farm Rd., Unit 2
Boyce, VA 22620
540-837-1600
<https://vnps.org/native-plant-nursery-list/>



Woodland Ferns

Ferns are wonderful foliage plants to combine with wildflowers in woodland gardens. They come in a variety of sizes, shapes, textures and shades of green and can be used as fillers, accents or ground covers. Cultivation requirements are similar to those for other plants listed here. In general, crown forming species spread slowly into large, single clumps, while those with underground creeping rhizomes spread more quickly into drifts or mats. Ferns provide cover and shelter for frogs, toads and lizards. Most listed here are caterpillar host plants for butterflies and moths.

Northern Maidenhair (*Adiantum pedatum*) 1-2'; circular fronds atop wiry stems; graceful and very beautiful; needs rich, moist soil.

Southern Lady (*Athyrium asplenoides*) 2-3'; intricately cut lacy fronds arise from creeping rhizomes; easy to grow in soil with average moisture; some plants have red stems.

Marginal Wood (*Dryopteris marginalis*) 1-2'; stiff, dull olive-green evergreen fronds rise in vase shape from central crown; drought tolerant.

Ostrich (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*) 3-5'; plume-shaped fronds in narrow, vase shape; creeping crown-forming rhizomes; spreads quickly in moist soil.

Sensitive (*Onoclea sensibilis*) 1-2'; broad, light green fronds; spreads quickly in moist soil; adapts to fairly dry soil in full shade.

Cinnamon (*Osmundastrum cinnamomeum*) 2-5'; erect clusters of outer fronds with inner fertile fronds that turn brown; good in wet areas.

New York (*Parathelypteris noveboracensis*) 1-2'; soft, delicate, lime-green fronds; tolerates sun in wet soil; spreads quickly from creeping rhizomes.

Christmas (*Polystichum acrostichoides*) 1-1.5'; dark green, leathery fronds are evergreen; adapts to dry soil.

Prince William Wildflower Society, a Chapter of the VNPS, holds a native plant sale on the Saturday before Mother's Day on the grounds of Bethel Lutheran Church, Sudley Rd. & Plantation Ln., Manassas. The chapter holds regular membership meetings, sponsors garden tours, walks and other events. Information at <http://www.vnps.org/princewilliamwildflowersociety/>

Text: Nancy Arrington, Art: Nicky Staunton

Wildflowers for Woodland Gardens



Prince William Wildflower Society
A Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 83
Manassas, VA 20108

Woodland Gardens

Look to nature for inspiration and direction for design and plant selection for woodland gardens. Observe plant combinations and placements and aim for the same “feeling” in your garden. Curves and irregular shapes are more pleasing than straight lines. Use natural materials such as native stone and wood for outlining beds and wood chips for paths.

Locate planting areas as far away from tree roots as possible to avoid damaging the roots and to lessen competition for moisture and nutrients. However, wildflowers can be planted in pockets of improved soil among tree roots. Main paths through the garden should be wide enough for two people to walk side by side. Plan narrow paths or stepping stones into large beds for close-up viewing and maintenance access.

Plant most species in groups of three, five or more for a natural look. Use large plants like Jack-in-the-pulpit and black cohosh singly as accents. Be sure the garden includes an understory of small native trees and shrubs for a smooth transition from tall trees down to the ground level herbaceous plants. Plan for all-season beauty with good foliage plants and species that bloom from early spring until frost.

Filtered shade is ideal for woodland plants. If the shade is too dense trees can be selectively removed or limbed up (remove lower branches to a height of 20') to create partial or filtered shade and to improve air circulation. Areas beneath trees, especially shallow-rooted maples and beeches, can become quite dry in summer, so consider other shady locations for plants requiring a constantly moist soil.

A humus-rich, slightly acidic soil that retains moisture but drains well is preferred by most woodland plants. Loosen soil to a depth of six to eight inches and mix in a two- or three-inch layer of organic matter such as compost or leafmold.

Ample moisture, especially in spring, is necessary. A few species adapt to slightly dry soil in summer, but most require consistent moisture through the growing season. A properly prepared soil and a two-inch layer of shredded leaves will hold and conserve moisture. Supplemental watering will be necessary while plants are becoming established and during periods of drought. As plants spread and knit together they will form a living or green mulch that will conserve moisture.

Maintenance. A woodland garden, properly planted with hardy, locally adapted species will remain attractive without high maintenance. A constantly decaying mulch will discourage weeds and add humus and nutrients to the soil. Ideally, a one-inch layer of compost or leaf mold should be added each spring.

Almost all plants included in this brochure are native to Northern Virginia; the few exceptions (*) are native to other areas of Virginia.



Color in the Woodland Garden

Here are just a few of the many beautiful native perennials suitable for different conditions of soil, moisture and shade in woodland gardens. All provide nectar and pollen for butterflies and bees, and some are host plants for moths and butterflies. The few ephemerals (plants that bloom in spring and go dormant by early summer) are noted. All can be propagated by seed and most can also be propagated by division. They're available from mail order and local nurseries or at VNPS chapter plant sales.

Plants are listed by blooming season from early spring until frost.

Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) 4-8"; lovely, fragile white flowers; foliage will remain attractive through summer in humus-rich soil with shade and adequate moisture.

Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*) 1-2'; beautiful and easy; pink buds open into porcelain blue bells. This spring ephemeral has served as PWWS's logo since our chapter was established in 1982.

Jacob's Ladder (*Polemonium reptans*) 1-1.5'; clusters of nodding blue flowers and year-round ferny foliage.

Cream Violet (*Viola striata*) 5-12"; white flowers for 3-5 weeks; will spread rapidly in rich, moist soil. Cut back after blooming for nice ground cover. **Dog Violet** (*V. labradorica*) with purple flowers and purplish-green foliage is less aggressive.

Jack-in-the-Pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*) 1-3'; green hooded “flower,” foliage may go dormant but bright red seed clusters add fall interest; needs moist, humus-rich soil and shade.

Wild Blue Phlox (*Phlox divaricata*) 1-1.5'; spreads to form lovely drifts; should be in every woodland garden; also a white form and several cultivars.

Perfoliate Bellwort (*Uvularia perfoliata*) 1'; clumps of light green foliage and clusters of lemon yellow flowers; summer dormant.

Golden Ragwort, Golden Groundsel (*Packera aurea*) 2-3'; yellow daisies in early spring; basal foliage attractive year-round; best in dry soil because it spreads rapidly in humus-rich, moist soil; deadhead to prevent unwanted seedlings.

Wild Bleeding Heart (*Dicentra eximia*) 1-1.5'; pink flower clusters and ferny foliage; blooms sparingly through summer if planted in rich, moist soil. Related **Dutchman's Breeches** (*D. cucullaria*) is a low-growing ephemeral with white flowers.

Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*) 1-2'; long blooming and easy; shades of magenta and pink; adapts to dry summer soil.

Eastern Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) 1-2'; easy to grow favorite; average soil fertility and moisture; red-yellow flowers attract hummingbirds.

Eastern Solomon's Plume (*Maianthemum racemosum*) 1-2'; showy white plumes and nice foliage; attractive berries in fall. Good in moist soil. **Solomon's Seal** (*Polygonatum biflorum*) 1-3'; has white bell-shaped flowers along arching stems in May.

Beard-tongue (*Penstemon digitalis*) 3-4'; white flowers in May; needs part shade and humus-rich, moist soil. This may be a midwestern native, but it grows naturally in Northern Virginia and is a good pollinator plant.

Black Cohosh, Fairy Candles (*Actaea racemosa*) 4-6'; white-flowered accent or background plant; filtered shade and moist soil.

Bowman's Root (*Gillenia trifoliata*) 2-3'; clusters of small white flowers in May; best in part shade and rich, moist soil.

Carolina Wild Petunia (*Ruellia carolinensis*) 1-2'; continuous lavender flowers from early to late summer; adapts to dry soil.

Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) 2-5'; a bright accent in part shade and moist soil; attracts hummingbirds. **Blue Lobelia** (*L. siphilitica*) 2-4'; is easy in part shade with average moisture.

Blue-stemmed Goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*) 1-2'; graceful yellow sprays are nice with ferns; adapts to slightly dry soil. **Zig-zag Goldenrod** (*S. flexicaulis*) 1-3'; grows in part to full shade.

White Wood Aster (*Eurybia divaricata*) 1-2'; nice drifts of color until frost; deadhead to prevent unwanted seedlings. Several other species and cultivars, including blue-flowered ones, are available.

Woodland Sunflower (*Helianthus divaricatus*), 2-5'; bright yellow daisies in part shade; adapts to dry soil.