

## Creation Care Garden Plant List

Underlined plants are natives or cultivars of natives described and pictured in this guide.

Plant descriptions in the guide are in alphabetical order.

### Spring blooming:

Lenten rose, Hellebore

Large-flowered bellwort

Dwarf Rhododendron 'Mary Fleming' (cream-colored 'azalea')

Viburnum 'Pearlific'

Redbud 'Ruby Falls'

Spanish bluebells, Wood hyacinths (Scilla)

Sweetspire (Itea virginica) 'Little Henry'

Green-and-Gold (Chrysogonum)

Heuchera, Coral bells, Alumroot

White fringe tree

### Summer blooming:

Yarrow

Coneflower, Echinacea

Bee balm, Monarda

Flowering spurge

Hyssop (Agastache)

Milkweeds – Common Milkweed, Swamp Milkweed, Butterflyweed

### Late summer to Fall blooming:

Summersweet (Clethra) 'Ruby Spice'

Mountain mint (Pycnanthemum)

Goldenrod spp.

Japanese Anemone 'Königin Charlotte'

Blue mistflower, wild ageratum

Toad lily

Black cohosh, Bugbane, Cathedral candles

### Grasses, Ferns and Trees:

Ostrich fern

Japanese painted fern

Little bluestem grass

Dwarf Japanese maple

## Blacksburg Presbyterian Church Creation Care Garden Plant Guide

### The Story Behind the Garden

In the fall of 2014, Way Cool Wednesday children, as a part of their unit on Creation, planted a Monarch Butterfly Habitat in this area, using seeds gathered from Common Milkweed. In the spring of 2015, the newly sprouted plants were supplemented with a few dozen milkweed seedlings. That fall several monarch butterfly caterpillars feasted on the leaves of the plants. Milkweeds are the caterpillars' only food source.

In 2015, the church's Creation Care Team was given a Manna Grant to "to initiate an ecological landscaping project in the garden area between the side of the church building and the parking lot. We propose [that the garden be] composed of native flowering plant species that attract wildlife, along with selected ornamental species that together would provide an aesthetically pleasing and ecologically sustainable landscape. It would also provide a venue for environmental care education."

This garden is the result, established in the spring of 2016, incorporating previously established plants into the garden, along with new native species and cultivars of natives. Plants were chosen for their ability to attract pollinators and wildlife and for interesting foliage and colorful flowers balanced over the seasons.

This guide offers alphabetical names, pictures and descriptions of many of the plants, giving information about their benefits to wildlife and their herbal and other uses for humans.

## Bee balm, Oswego Tea

*(Monarda didyma)*

**Habitat:** Bee balm is a widespread perennial, a member of the mint family native to eastern North America. It can be found in moist meadows, hillsides, and forest clearings up to 5000 ft. elevation.

**Description:** As is typical of mints, bee balm has opposite, serrated leaves, a square, branched stem and a minty fragrance. In mid to late summer, it has scarlet-red flowers in terminal 2" tufts atop 3' stems. The individual flowers in each tuft are narrowly tube-shaped and form a daisy-like cluster.

**Benefits to Wildlife:** As its name indicates, its fragrance attracts bees; butterflies, and especially hummingbirds, are attracted to the red flowers.

**Herbal uses:** This plant has a long history of use as a medicinal plant by Native Americans, as an antiseptic for infections and wounds, as a stimulant, to relieve flatulence, and to treat headache and fever. It is a natural source of thymol, the primary ingredient in some modern mouthwash formulas. Early colonists (the Oswegos of New York) used the leaves of the plant for tea when regular tea was scarce, thus the alternate common name, Oswego Tea.



## Yarrow 'Saucy Seduction'

*(Achillea millefolium)*

**Habitat:** Yarrow is common throughout the northern hemisphere. The species is widely variable, and is a complex of both native and introduced plants. Drought and heat tolerant, it grows along roadsides, fields and waste areas.

**Description:** Yarrow is noted for its deeply dissected, fern-like, aromatic foliage and tiny, long-lasting, summer-blooming flowers in dense, flattened clusters at the top of 2-3' stems. The foliage has a spicy aroma, which persists even when dried. Common yarrow has whitish flowers that are rarely pink. Our cultivar has rose-pink flowers with tiny white centers.

**Benefits to Wildlife:** Irresistible to butterflies, it also attracts bees, beneficial insects, moths and other pollinators with its pollen-rich flowers.

**Herbal uses:** Yarrow was formerly used for medicinal purposes: to break a fever by increasing perspirations, to treat hemorrhaging and as a poultice for rashes. The genus name *Achillea* refers to Achilles, hero of the Trojan Wars in Greek mythology, who used the plant medicinally to stop bleeding and to heal the wounds of his soldiers.



## Viburnum 'Pearlific'

**Habitat:** Viburnums are well-behaved members of the honeysuckle family. This diverse genus of shrubs and trees are some of the most beautiful for landscapes and gardens. There are more than 150 species of viburnum, with most varieties in nature occurring over north temperate regions. Our specific cultivar of viburnum is similar to varieties native to our area.

**Description:** This viburnum grows to a 5'-6' rounded shrub, with medium-to-deep green evergreen foliage and round showy clusters of blooms. Pink-tinged buds open to mildly fragrant white flowers in late April. Red berry-like fruits ripen to black as the season progresses.

**Benefits to Wildlife:** Bees are the chief pollinators, though other insects will visit the blooms. Birds are attracted to the berries.

**Herbal and other uses:** The fruit of some viburnum species is edible, either raw or in jam, while other species are mildly toxic. In prehistory, the long, straight shoots of some viburnums were used for arrow shafts.



## Large-flowered Bellwort (Uvularia grandiflora)

**Habitat:** Large-flowered bellwort is a common perennial in the lily family, native to rich woodlands in Eastern North America, blooming in cool, shady sites in April and May. It is most attractive and noticeable in clumps, as it is in our garden near the door.

**Description:** It forms an upright clump of light-green pleated leaves which are pierced by the stem. Its delicate butter-yellow flowers are nodding, bell-shaped and made of six petals that twist in a charming way, appearing limp even when fresh. After flowering, the stems elongate, eventually reaching 3 feet tall. A 3-sided seed capsule forms in July-August.

**Benefits to Wildlife:** The flowers are pollinated by bumblebees, which crawl up inside the flowers and gather large amounts of pollen and suck up sugar-rich nectar as an energy source. Ants and rodents collect ripened seeds and eat or disperse them.

**Herbal uses:** The young shoots are edible when cooked like asparagus, without the leafy heads that turn bitter. Native Americans used this plant for its medicinal value in reducing swelling, as an analgesic for back pain and sore muscles, and to reduce stomach pain. The root can be used as a poultice for wounds, ulcers and venomous snakebites.





## Black Cohosh, Bugbane, Cathedral Candles, (*Actaea* [formerly *Cimicifuga*] *racemosa*)

**Habitat:** Black Cohosh is a native North American perennial herb, found from southern Canada to the Appalachian Mountains and as far south as Georgia and Missouri. It grows mostly on hillsides and in open woods in moist rich soil.

**Description:** It has many stems of leaves that are large and doubly divided into 3's, making an attractive bush-like perennial 4 or 5 feet wide and high prior to bloom. Then, in October, the flower stems that have been extending for months emerge into big plumes or wands of white bottlebrush sweet-smelling flowers, reaching up to 8 feet tall!

**Benefits to Wildlife:** When the plant is in bloom, it attracts many insects to its pollen and nectar, including flies, gnats, and bees. It is the host plant for Appalachian blue and spring azure butterfly larvae.

**Herbal uses:** More than two centuries ago, Native Americans discovered that the root of the black cohosh plant helped relieve menstrual cramps and symptoms of menopause, such as hot flashes, irritability, mood swings, and sleep disturbances. It is still used for that purpose today.



## Sweetspire (*Itea virginica*) 'Little Henry'

**Habitat:** Sweetspire or *Itea* is a 3-8' (ours is a smaller cultivar) mound-shaped deciduous shrub native to the southeastern United States. It favors wet wooded stream banks and low pine barrens.

**Description:** Sweetspire is one of our most attractive native shrubs, putting on a show both in spring and fall. It features fragrant, tiny white flowers in slender, drooping racemes 3-6" long (like bottle brushes) that cover the plant in late spring to early summer. Oval, dark green leaves slowly turn shades of red, orange, maroon and gold in autumn, persisting on the plant until early winter.

**Benefits to Wildlife:** The foliage provides cover for birds and other wildlife. The flowers attract butterflies and many other pollinating insects.



## Summersweet (*Clethra alnifolia*)

### ‘Ruby Spice’

**Habitat:** *Clethra alnifolia*, commonly called summersweet or sweet pepperbush, is a deciduous shrub that is native to swampy woodlands, wet marshes, stream banks and sea-shores, often in sandy soils, along the coast from Maine to Florida and west to Texas. It is somewhat unique among flowering shrubs in its ability to bloom in shady locations in late summer when few other shrubs are in bloom.

**Description:** Summersweet is a rounded, densely-branched shrub that typically grows 3-6 feet tall and is noted for its fragrant white to pale pink flowers which appear in mid to late summer in narrow upright clusters 2-6" long. Our shrub is planted near the door into our building so passersby may enjoy the sweet scent. Dark brown seed capsules may persist into winter. Oblong, glossy green leaves generally turn attractive shades of yellow to golden brown in fall.

**Benefits to Wildlife:** The flowers are highly attractive to butterflies and bees, for which it is considered an important honey plant.



## Coneflower or *Echinacea*

**Habitat:** These perennials are mostly native to moist prairies, meadows and open woods of the central to southeastern United States. Though common in and well-adapted to southwestern Virginia, it is not strictly native to the mountainous provinces where we live.

**Description:** It has prominent, dark orange central cones surrounded by horizontal, reddish-pink or pinkish-purple ray petals. Our nursery coneflowers are the standard pinkish-purple, though colors range from white to pale yellow to deep salmon orange.

**Benefits to Wildlife:** These vibrant, daisy-like flowers bloom from midsummer into early autumn, attracting butterflies and hummingbirds. The dead flower stems will remain erect well into the winter, and, if not removed, the blackened flower cones may continue to be visited by goldfinches or other birds that feed on the seeds.

**Herbal uses:** Promoters of Echinacea (eki-náy-shə) say that the herb encourages the immune system and reduces many of the symptoms of colds, flu and other illnesses, infections and conditions.





## White Fringe Tree

(*Chionanthus virginicus*)

**Habitat:** Fringe tree is a small tree native to the southeastern United States, growing from New Jersey south to Florida. Adapting to full sun or partial shade, it grows along stream drainages, near swamps and in drier upland woods in sandy to deep rich soils in most counties of Virginia, though it is uncommonly seen in the wild.

**Description:** Fringe trees are often multi-trunked and seldom grow more than 20 feet tall. One of the last trees to bloom in spring, it may appear dead until the flowers and leaves appear. The botanical name translates as snow flower, an excellent description of the fluffy, white flowers in drooping clusters that cover fringe trees in bloom. Simple non-toothed leaves turn yellow in fall. Blackish-blue, egg-shaped fruits ripen in late summer to early fall. In the olive family, it is related to the ash tree.

**Benefits to Wildlife:** The fruits are attractive to a variety of wildlife, including songbirds, quail and turkeys.

**Herbal uses:** Traditionally, Native Americans produced a tonic from the dried roots and bark for use in treating sores and wounds and reducing fevers.



## Redbud (Cercis canadensis)

'Ruby Falls'

**Habitat:** Redbuds are understory trees native to the eastern and southern US. They can tolerate sunny to moderately shaded locations as well as a variety of soil types, and are commonly seen in our area at woods edges.

**Description:** In early spring, clusters of tiny pink rose-purple pea-like flowers sprout profusely from naked branches and mature trunks. Afterwards, heart-shaped leaves appear. Seed pods resembling snow peas appear in summer. Our cultivar, 'Ruby Falls', has maroon or deep purple leaves, which turn to dark green with violet streaks in summer. It is a dwarf variety (6'-8' tall) with drooping or weeping branches.

**Benefits to Wildlife:** The early blossoms draw in early-season nectar-seeking insects. A few songbirds, such as chickadees, will eat the seeds. The tree is used for nesting sites and nesting materials, in addition to animal and bird shelter.

**Herbal and other uses:** The flowers yield a bright yellow dye. Tannins in the inner-bark and root have been used to heal lung congestion, diarrhea, dysentery and whooping cough. The Navajo would roast the pods and eat the broiled seeds. Native American and European American children enjoyed eating the fresh flowers of the redbud, which contain healthful flavonoids. The flowers have been found to have a higher vitamin C content than many fruits, including oranges!



## Ostrich fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*)

**Habitat:** Ostrich fern is a colony-forming, upright to arching, deciduous fern which may reach 6' tall in moist, cool climates in the wild. It occurs in temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere in Asia, Europe and North America. The name *struthiopteris* comes from ancient Greek words meaning ostrich and wing.

**Description:** The fronds of ostrich fern emerge in spring and unfurl to finely dissected medium green leaves which exhibit the feathery appearance of ostrich plumes. Ostrich ferns reproduce by spores, which are produced on fertile fronds that are much less showy. The plants go completely dormant in winter.

**Benefits to Wildlife:** Ferns provide seasonal cover and hiding places for many ground-frequenting birds such as thrushes, robins and wrens. They also serve as protection for wood and green frogs, tree frogs and toads. Ostrich fern is used as a food plant by the larvae of some species of moths.

**Herbal uses:** The tightly-wound immature fronds, called fiddleheads, resemble the spiral end of a violin, and, when cooked, are a prized food delicacy, especially in rural areas of northern New England. It is said that fern fiddleheads have a flavor similar to a cross of asparagus, green bean, and okra.



## Goldenrod (*Solidago*)

**Habitat:** There are more than 100 species of goldenrod, growing all over North America in meadows, fields, open woods and trailsides. Almost every area of the continent has at least several species that are abundant.

**Description:** Goldenrods have alternate, simple leaves, with a cluster of flower heads at the top of the 2 to 5 foot stalk, each containing up to thirty individual florets, usually golden yellow, opening in the late summer to early fall. Most species spread over time, some quite aggressively. We have two species in our garden, though it is difficult to determine exactly which they are! Goldenrod is insect-pollinated, not releasing its pollen into the air. Thus, despite its reputation for causing hay-fever, it is usually ragweed that is the actual culprit. You would need to stick your nose right into the flower to have an allergic reaction!

**Benefits to Wildlife:** Goldenrod supports over one hundred species of caterpillars, and is a popular nectar flower for many butterflies, including monarchs. It also attracts garden beneficials, such as praying mantises, ladybugs, assassin bugs, syrphid flies and parasitic wasps.

**Herbal uses:** Goldenrod has been used for centuries as a medicine, dye plant and beverage tea. Native American peoples used various species for a wide variety of ailments, both topically for burns, wounds and sores, and internally, for urinary, respiratory and digestive ailments.





## Green-and-gold, Goldenstar (*Chrysogonum virginianum*)

**Habitat:** Green-and-gold, a plant in the sunflower family, is native to woodland areas in the eastern United States. It can be found in southwest VA in rich moist soils in sun-dappled shade.

**Description:** On the far side of our garden between the dwarf Japanese maple and the walkway, these are low-growing ground cover plants with attractive semi-evergreen leaves and bright yellow five-petaled flowers that appear mostly in the late spring and early summer.

**Benefits to wildlife:** Its flowers are pollinated by bees and butterflies and its seeds are eaten by songbirds.



## Flowering Spurge (*Euphorbia carollata*)

**Habitat:** Flowering spurge is native to the entire eastern U.S.

**Description:** This flower is sometimes called native baby's breath, because its tiny white flowers resemble those of the baby's breath used by florists. It grows up to 3 feet tall, with smooth stems and light green leaves arranged in whorls. Its white sprays brighten our garden in midsummer.

**Benefits to wildlife:** The flowers are pollinated by a variety of insects

**Herbal and other uses:** Flowering spurge has a milky sap that has had traditional medicinal uses, especially among the Cherokee, although it is an irritant to many people, and is generally avoided by mammals as well.

## Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum*)

**Habitat:** Mountain Mint is a perennial herb native to Northern America and Canada, from Virginia to New England, from North Dakota to Georgia. It is found in gravelly shores, meadows, dry to wet thickets, roadsides, and open woods.

**Description:** It is a stout perennial, with tiny, white, mint-like flowers, often spotted with purple, arranged in numerous small, dense clusters and blooming only a few at a time from late summer to early fall. The upper foliage of this leafy plant is covered with a whitish coating, or bloom. Catnip and lavender are in the same family.

**Benefits to Wildlife:** In a Penn State study over 3 years, mountain mint was *the* top plant for pollinator visits! Many insects feed on the nectar and pollen, including ladybugs and other insects that eat other troublesome insects in the garden.

**Herbal and other uses:** Raw or cooked, the flower buds and leaves are edible and have a hot, spicy, mint-like flavor that makes a great spice or seasoning for meat. The fresh or dried leaves may be brewed into a refreshing mint-like medicinal herb tea. This very aromatic herb can be used in potpourri, burned as incense, or used to freshen laundry in the dryer or to keep moths away. Mountain Mint is loaded with an insect repellent called pulegone, which can be rubbed on the skin to repel mosquitoes.





## Blue Mistflower, Wild Ageratum (*Conoclimium coelestinum*)

**Habitat:** This perennial flower, commonly called mistflower, is native to the central and southeastern United States, especially in sunlit wet woodlands and in moist ground along streams, ponds and ditches. It is relatively common in our area, blooming in late summer to fall. In the garden, it can spread fairly aggressively by rhizomes.

**Description:** The plant typically grows 1-3 feet tall with downy purplish stems and coarsely toothed leaves. From as early as July to first frost, it bears dense, flat-topped clusters of numerous small fluffy purple flowers. The prolific blooms, like small clouds of mist, resemble those of the non-native annual ageratum, and thus it is also commonly called wild or hardy ageratum.

**Benefits to Wildlife:** Mistflower is loved by pollinators, especially late-season butterflies and native bees.

**Herbal and other uses:** Mistflowers are in the same family as bonesets, thoroughworts, and snakeroots, many of which have been used historically to treat fevers, broken bones (as one of the names implies) and other health ailments. Wild ageratum, specifically, is not used as a medicinal herb, and not many mammals eat it due to its bitter taste.



## Hyssop 'Arizona Sandstone' (*Agastache*)

**Habitat:** There are at least 22 species of *Agastache*, almost all native to North America, preferring plains and prairies in the Midwest, but also found in thickets in the East. They are hardy, deep-rooted plants, tolerant of drought, in the mint family.

**Description:** Hyssop has spikes of mint-scented two-lipped tubular flowers that appear summer to fall. The flowers are usually pink, mauve, or purple; however, this 10" tall cultivar has terra-cotta orange flowers.

**Benefits to Wildlife:** Hyssop attracts butterflies and hummingbirds. Another name for the plant is hummingbird mint.

**Herbal uses:** The aromatic leaves and flowers are good in teas and for cooking. Native Americans used the leaves medicinally as well.



## Milkweeds – Common, Swamp and Butterfly (*Asclepias*)

**Habitat:** These 3 kinds of milkweed are the most common ones native to our area. All are perennials that like full sun, and most have a milky sap that oozes out when the stem or leaves are torn. The sap contains cardiac glycosides, making the plant toxic to most insects and animals. However, a few insects, including monarch butterfly larvae, can store the glycosides in their tissue, rendering them inedible or toxic to predators, who learn to leave them alone. Milkweeds are the sole source of food for monarch butterfly larvae, and for the black and orange milkweed bug.

*Common Milkweed* is the milkweed most likely to colonize disturbed areas. It can be found in a broad array of habitats from croplands, to pastures, roadsides, ditches and fields. Because it has often been regarded as a weed to be destroyed, a reduction in numbers of plants is one of the factors that has threatened monarch populations.

*Swamp milkweed* prefers damp soils, and typically is found near edges of ponds, lakes and streams, and in ditches. In our garden, it has been the milkweed most favored by monarch caterpillars.

*Butterfly weed* favors sand, dry or gravel soil, though it also does well in home gardens.

**Description:** Milkweeds have clusters of ¼" flowers, each with 5 reflexed petals and 5 raised hoods with curved horns, with the hoods tending to be more light-colored than the petals. Seedpods split open along one side in the fall to release numerous seeds with large tufts of white hair, which act as parachutes to carry the seeds on the wind.

*Common milkweed* grows 2'-6' tall with stout unbranched stems. In mid-summer, 2"-4" balls of fragrant flowers are produced, ranging in color from faded light pink to reddish purple. Leaves are fairly large and somewhat thick with reddish main veins.

*Swamp milkweed* grows 3'-5' tall, with stout branched stems and narrow lance-shaped leaves. Its fragrant blooms are pink to mauve-colored, in rounded upright clusters.

*Butterfly weed* grows 1'-3' tall, with clusters of bright orange or yellow flowers, and spirally arranged leaves.

**Benefits to Wildlife:** Milkweeds in bloom are butterfly magnets, and a nectar source for bees and many other insects.

**Herbal and other uses:** Native Americans used milkweed for fibers, and taught early settlers how to cook it to be eaten for medicinal purposes. The milky sap was used topically to remove warts. During WW II, milkweed floss was used as a substitute for stuffing life jackets – it is about 6 times more buoyant than cork! Today the floss is harvested for use in pillows and comforters.



Ripe milkweed pod



Common milkweed



Swamp milkweed



Butterfly weed