



VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Conserving Wild Flowers and Wild Places

STATEMENT ON CULTIVARS

March 17, 2021

The Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS) encourages communities and individuals to incorporate native plants into managed landscapes and, when doing so, to maximize the use of wild-type plants. Such an approach provides the most reliable way to support the flora and fauna with which these plant species have coevolved over millennia, to maintain genetic diversity and to minimize the risks inherent in introducing plants to an ecosystem. This is particularly important in ecological restoration projects, mass plantings in parks and on private grounds and in any landscaping in proximity to natural areas.

VNPS recognizes that wild-type plants may be difficult to find in the marketplace, and that cultivars and hybrids of native plant species can offer distinctive characteristics which increase their effectiveness in landscape design. However, due to documented cases where the introduction of cultivated plants has negatively impacted natural populations, and because the ecological implications of such plants have not yet been adequately evaluated, we recommend avoiding hybrids and using cultivars only in locations distant from natural areas, e.g., urban gardens and to exercise caution in the selection of plants that vary significantly from the wild type, e.g., in flower structure, flower color, fruit size and leaf color.

VNPS encourages the horticulture industry to provide more wild-type plants and to clearly label cultivars to assist the public in distinguishing between the two.