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** (*Eriogon pulchellus*, 6-12") ground-hugging foliage with white, daisy-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.

*Creeeping 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.

*Barefoot 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/

Wildflowers for Woodland Gardens

**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 asplenioide*sa*) 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 Virginia Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 83
Manassas, VA 20108

Text: Nancy Arrington, Art: Nicky Staunton
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.

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.

**Color in the Woodland Garden**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Bloom Period</th>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Spacing</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bloodroot</td>
<td>Sanguinaria canadensis</td>
<td>April-June</td>
<td>4-8”</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>Lovely, fragrant white flowers; foliage will remain attractive through summer in humus-rich soil with shade and adequate moisture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Bluebell</td>
<td>Mertensia virginica</td>
<td>April-May</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob’s Ladder</td>
<td>Polemonium reptans</td>
<td>April-June</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>Clusters of nodding blue flowers and year-round ferny foliage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cream Pink</td>
<td>Viola striata</td>
<td>April-June</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack-in-the-Pulpit</td>
<td>Arisaema triphyllum</td>
<td>May-July</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>Green hooded “flower,” foliage may go dormant but bright red seed clusters add fall interest; needs moist, humus-rich soil and shade.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Plants by Blooming Season**

**Early Spring (March)**
- *Bloodroot* (Sanguinaria canadensis)
- *Virginia Bluebell* (Mertensia virginica)
- *Jacob’s Ladder* (Polemonium reptans)
- *Cream Pink* (Viola striata)

**Mid Spring (April)**
- *Jack-in-the-Pulpit* (Arisaema triphyllum)
- *Wild Bleeding Heart* (Dicentra eximia)
- *Wild Geranium* (Geranium maculatum)
- *Eastern Columbine* (Aquilegia canadensis)

**Late Spring (May)**
- *Wild Blue Phlox* (Phlox divaricata)
- *Perfoliate Bellwort* (Uvularia perfoliata)
- *Golden Ragwort* (Golden Groundsel) (Packera aurea)
- *Wild Bloodroot* (D. cucullaria)
- *Wild Geranium* (Geranium maculatum)
- *Eastern Columbine* (Aquilegia canadensis)

**Summer (June-September)**
- *Bloodroot* (Sanguinaria canadensis)
- *Virginia Bluebell* (Mertensia virginica)
- *Jacob’s Ladder* (Polemonium reptans)
- *Cream Pink* (Viola striata)
- *Jack-in-the-Pulpit* (Arisaema triphyllum)
- *Wild Bleeding Heart* (Dicentra eximia)
- *Wild Geranium* (Geranium maculatum)
- *Eastern Columbine* (Aquilegia canadensis)
- *Bloodroot* (Sanguinaria canadensis)
- *Virginia Bluebell* (Mertensia virginica)
- *Jacob’s Ladder* (Polemonium reptans)
- *Cream Pink* (Viola striata)
- *Jack-in-the-Pulpit* (Arisaema triphyllum)
- *Wild Bleeding Heart* (Dicentra eximia)
- *Wild Geranium* (Geranium maculatum)
- *Eastern Columbine* (Aquilegia canadensis)

**Early Summer (June)**
- *Bloodroot* (Sanguinaria canadensis)
- *Virginia Bluebell* (Mertensia virginica)
- *Jacob’s Ladder* (Polemonium reptans)
- *Cream Pink* (Viola striata)
- *Jack-in-the-Pulpit* (Arisaema triphyllum)
- *Wild Bleeding Heart* (Dicentra eximia)
- *Wild Geranium* (Geranium maculatum)
- *Eastern Columbine* (Aquilegia canadensis)

**Mid Summer (July)**
- *Bloodroot* (Sanguinaria canadensis)
- *Virginia Bluebell* (Mertensia virginica)
- *Jacob’s Ladder* (Polemonium reptans)
- *Cream Pink* (Viola striata)
- *Jack-in-the-Pulpit* (Arisaema triphyllum)
- *Wild Bleeding Heart* (Dicentra eximia)
- *Wild Geranium* (Geranium maculatum)
- *Eastern Columbine* (Aquilegia canadensis)

**Late Summer (August)**
- *Bloodroot* (Sanguinaria canadensis)
- *Virginia Bluebell* (Mertensia virginica)
- *Jacob’s Ladder* (Polemonium reptans)
- *Cream Pink* (Viola striata)
- *Jack-in-the-Pulpit* (Arisaema triphyllum)
- *Wild Bleeding Heart* (Dicentra eximia)
- *Wild Geranium* (Geranium maculatum)
- *Eastern Columbine* (Aquilegia canadensis)

**Fall (September-October)**
- *Bloodroot* (Sanguinaria canadensis)
- *Virginia Bluebell* (Mertensia virginica)
- *Jacob’s Ladder* (Polemonium reptans)
- *Cream Pink* (Viola striata)
- *Jack-in-the-Pulpit* (Arisaema triphyllum)
- *Wild Bleeding Heart* (Dicentra eximia)
- *Wild Geranium* (Geranium maculatum)
- *Eastern Columbine* (Aquilegia canadensis)