

Go Wild with Native Plants in your Lawn and Garden this Fall

(Hampton Roads, Va., Sept. 6, 2022) – The summer is fading fast, much like the grass you coaxed into growing just a few months ago. The fall season is an ideal time to assess your lawn and garden areas and even consider a new vision for the space. Replacing traditional sod with a mix of native plants and groundcovers that boost wildlife populations is growing in popularity. And the people who power the askHRgreen.org environmental education initiative encourage people to give “rewilding” a try.

“There are many benefits to having a natural landscape, including the time and money you will save on seeding, feeding and mowing traditional grass lawns every year,” said Rebekah Eastep, with askHRgreen.org. “But the biggest impact will be on the environment, including the wildlife and pollinators that will be attracted to all that lush beauty.”

[Plant Virginia Natives](#), a collaborative initiative created to increase the local availability and use of native plants statewide, offers tips for creating a landscape in which nature takes care of itself.

- First, control or remove invasive species that are known to be problematic to the environment, such as English ivy, Japanese honeysuckle, periwinkle, privet, nandina and barberry.
- Next, look at your landscape to see what changes you would like to make. Consider planting native species of trees, shrubs, perennials, and groundcovers suitable to your area’s growing conditions. Choose these in varying heights and layers to ensure adequate coverage and diversity throughout your space. An overhead canopy of trees, for instance, provides wildlife with a food source, nesting cover and shelter from the elements.
- Include plants for the pollinators, such as hummingbirds, bats, bees, beetles, butterflies, and flies that carry pollen from one plant to another.
- For those who live on the water, create a wide plant buffer at the edge to intercept sediments and filter out nutrients that run off the land.
- If you do wish to retain some lawn space, keep it to a minimum.

- Finally, leave the leaves! Setting aside areas in your landscape for leaf beds and using leaves as mulch provides an essential habitat for critters. In our area, this includes salamanders, box turtles, birds and other wildlife.

“Making any of these changes will help to transform your yard into a healthy ‘rewilded’ environment, but don’t feel you have to do everything at once,” Eastep said. “Working on your yard over time will allow you to view your landscape throughout the seasons. It can be fun to wait and see what nature has in store.”

Plant Virginia Natives publishes native plant guides for all Virginia regions. Download the *Native Plants for Southeast Virginia* guide [at this link](#). And for more information like this, visit askHRgreen.org.

About askHRgreen.org askHRgreen.org is your go-to resource for all things green in Hampton Roads – from recycling tips and pointers for keeping local waterways clean to water-saving ideas and simple steps to make local living easy on the environment. Launched in 2011, the region-wide public awareness and education campaign is administered through the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission and powered by the following members: The cities of Chesapeake, Franklin, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach, and Williamsburg; the counties of Gloucester, Isle of Wight, James City, Southampton, Surry and York; the town of Smithfield; and HRSD. Like [askHRgreen.org](#) on [Facebook](#), follow on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), tune in to [YouTube](#) and catch the “Let’s Talk Green” [blog](#), written by a team of local experts.

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