

Plant Swap and Sale

Information about Native Plants, Invasive Plants

What is a Plant Swap & Sale for Backyard Habitat? It's an opportunity for gardeners to divide their perennials and pot up native seedling shrubs, trees, grasses, and groundcovers that they can share with other habitat gardeners.

Why the emphasis on native plants? Native plants provide food -- nuts, seeds, berries, fruits, leaves, and nectar -- that best meet the needs of butterflies and other pollinators, as well as hummingbirds and other birds. Native trees and shrubs are especially suited to our growing conditions, and our native birds and butterfly caterpillars are adapted to feeding on what they provide. One of the most compelling reasons for introducing more native plants into your landscape is that nesting birds feed their young a diet that is almost exclusively protein-rich insects -- insects that are also adapted to native trees and shrubs (insects that won't be found in forsythia, Bradford pear, azaleas, and a host of other aliens.) Food and insect-bearing trees are especially critical to New Jersey's huge numbers of migratory birds, who must be able to find massed and adequate supplies of food, if they are to survive their journeys.

What about groundcovers? Native groundcovers are an important feature of a backyard habitat. If you have extra native ferns, wild ginger, bearberry, teaberry, May apple, partridge-berry, wild geranium, foamflower, low-bush huckleberries and blueberry, or other perennials or native groundcovers, please bring them. As more home owners reduce the size of their lawns in favor of shrub and tree borders, groundcovers make much-sought-after plants for swapping.

How do I know what is native? If you can put a name to the plant, you might start by looking at the sites mentioned below. If you are unsure of an ID, you might want to check in a field guides for plant identification. (Many can be found at the library.) You are also welcome to call the number listed below with your questions, and please feel free to bring a sample of the plant(s) in question to the Plant Swap for an ID. If you are confused trying to tell natives from non-natives, you are not alone! Alien plants are so abundant many think of them as having always been here. Some aliens that might look like natives and aren't acceptable for swapping include bugleweed (*Ajuga*), hostas, perrywinkle (*Vinca* vine), lily-of-the valley, yarrow, *Wisteria*, bittersweet, Norway maple, *Mimosa*, pachysandra, and azaleas.

How do I know what plants are invasive? For information on invasive species go to: www.npsnj.org/invasive_species_0103.htm

How do I know which non-natives are "especially beneficial to wildlife"? Our plant swap will also include non-native, non-invasive plants that are especially beneficial to birds and butterflies such as catmints, globe amaranth, lavender, Mexican sunflower, *Penta*, *Verbena bonariensis*, *Zinnia*, *Sedum*, chaste tree, blue mist shrub, glossy abelia, and others. Please note: We will not be swapping butterfly bush (*Buddleia*), as it is now listed as an invasive species. Please see the UUCSJS and NJ Audubon websites below for more information and lists of beneficial plants.

*For more information and lists and links to backyard habitat plants, butterfly and hummingbird plants go to: www.uucsjs.org/social_action.html, www.njaudubon.org