

## Plant Natives!

- By planting natives, we all have the power to make a significant contribution toward sustaining biodiversity and protecting our native heritage.
- When you purchase natives, please go to reputable nurseries and never collect plants from the wild.
- The MWA will provide additional information about native plants, including lists of plants and local suppliers where native plants are available.
- Stop by the River Resource Center to see our plantings, and look for updates on native planting at the RRC and on our website.
- If we use plants that developed with our local communities, we may be able to save much of our biodiversity from extinction. We will coexist with nature rather than compete with her.



*Brownie Troop #580 planting tree seedlings at the RRC*

## Why Go Native?

- Native plant species have co-evolved with insects and other animals from our region and are suited to this habitat.
- Native plants provide benefits to the river, to people, and to wildlife.
- Native plants support diverse and balanced food webs that are essential to sustainable ecosystems.
- The MWA has established plantings that demonstrate these interactions between native plants and animals and will provide information to the public about native species.
- Native plants are a feature of the U. S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program; MWA's River Resource Center received their highest recognition, Platinum Certification.



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# Native Planting

at the  
River Resource Center



*Photo courtesy of Kathleen M. Calello*



Photo courtesy of Nancy Lawler

## Benefits to People

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- Native plants are economical. They do not need watering once they are established and water savings can be considerable. There is little or no need for fertilizers or pesticides.
- Native plants are tough. Many seed themselves and do not require soil preparation or replacement.
- Native plants keep us healthy. Less pollution from chemicals in our gardens protects our streams and drinking water.
- Native plants save time. Their genetic diversity insures that they remain adapted to local conditions. They can withstand periods of drought and hot summer temperatures.
- Native plants support our food supply. They attract natural pollinators that need the food and shelter that they provide.
- Native plants are beautiful. Their subtle variety of textures and changing colors make natural landscapes appealing and interesting.

## Benefits to Wildlife

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- The berries, nuts, flowers, nectar, stems, and leaves of native plants are an indispensable food source for hundreds of species of insects, birds, and other animals.
- Native plant habitat provides homes and shelter for numerous species.
- Native plants provide the best food sources for resident and migratory birds. Migrating species stock up on huge quantities of food from natives in preparation for their long seasonal journeys. Nesting songbirds feed their young insects that depend on native plants for part of their life cycle.
- Most native insects cannot, or will not, eat alien plants. Without these insects, an important food source for our birds and other animals disappears. While some animals have a varied diet, others are highly specialized and depend upon certain plant species for food. Planting natives will help to ensure their survival.

Photo courtesy of John Parke



## Butterflies and Hummingbirds

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Native plants attract hummingbirds which provide essential pollination services. Many natives are also host plants for butterflies, providing both food for their caterpillars and nectar for the adult butterflies.



## Benefits to River

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- Shade from trees and shrubs lowers the river temperature for trout and other species that require cool water.
- Native buffers provide habitat for aquatic organisms that form the foundation of our river ecosystem.
- Many natives can withstand high water velocities and prevent erosion and silt from building up in the riverbed.
- Native plants filter pollution and help keep our rivers and ponds clean.
- Planting natives reduces the possibility of water contamination because native plants don't need fertilizers or pesticides.
- Native plants help recharge groundwater that supplies our aquifers.
- Natives help increase the availability of water in our streams because they do not need irrigation.