



## ***SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS***

Affiliated with National Volunteer Outreach Network, Country Women's Council, U.S.A., Associated Country Women of the World and in partnership with Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service  
SCFCL website: <http://www.scfcl.com>

### **Leader Training Guide**

#### **NATIVE PLANTS IN THE HOME LANDSCAPE**

**Objectives:** After completing this course, students will understand the benefits of native plants and be able to define a native plant. They will also be able to list the cultural conditions that should be considered when selecting native plants for the landscape.-

#### **Lesson Overview/Introduction:**

Students will learn why native plants are considered low-maintenance as well as how to place them in their landscape according to their cultural requirements.

#### **Lesson:**

What is a native plant, anyway?

A native plant is one that occurs naturally in a particular region, ecosystem, or habitat without direct or indirect human intervention. We consider the flora present at the time Europeans arrived in North America as the species native to the eastern United States. Native plants include all kinds of plants from mosses and ferns to wildflowers, shrubs, and trees.

Native plants have adapted to local conditions, having co-existed with other plants, animals, pollinators and soil conditions. They require little maintenance and withstand temperature and moisture extremes. Native plants provide sources of food and shelter for a wide variety of insects, birds, butterflies, mammals, and reptiles. In return, wildlife helps with pollination and spreading of seeds for future plants.

Planting native shrubs, trees, flowers and vines helps attract beneficial insects, bees, birds and butterflies to the home landscape.

Learn to appreciate native plants and add them to your home landscape plan. Plants in the early days of our country and more locally, South Carolina, were used for food and medicine. There were no hybridized plants. Everything was original. Early plant explorers like William Bartram took great pride in finding new and unusual plants to be sent across the ocean to England. These early American native plants were used to beautify English gardens.

Returning to native plants in the home landscape makes sense because "natives" are already adjusted to the prevailing climate conditions, soil, shade or sun, heat or cold, and wet or dry.

Number one of the nine principals for environmentally-friendly home landscape is the right plant-right place. Even though a plant is native to an area the cultural conditions required of that

species must be considered. For instance Southern Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*) requires a large area to grow with full to part sun and a Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*) requires part shade and well-drained soil to thrive in the landscape. These two tree species are both native to South Carolina but have very different cultural requirements. The ultimate size of the plant must also be considered for proper placement in the landscape. A 30 foot tall tree in a space that only accommodates a 10 foot tall tree will always require pruning.. Having to prune a tree only adds to maintenance, which requires more of your time.

Are native plants a better choice for your garden?

The answer lies, in part, in your own judgment. Native woodland wildflowers will not always give your shady garden the riots of color that can be had with impatiens and caladiums, but if you like to garden with elegant and underused plants, they are great. If you want to create a garden that emulates nature, they are essential. As with any plant that you want to grow, however, the right plant must be matched with the right spot. There are a myriad of native plants that thrive in every type of habitat imaginable. It's your job to do some research to find the best species for your landscape.

### **Lesson Summary:**

Try to use natives as often as possible in the home landscape for ease of maintenance, adaptability of soil conditions, moisture, shade or sun, beauty of flower or foliage and food shelter for wildlife. We also want to continue to use the nine principals for an environmentally friendly landscape.

The nine principals are:

1. Right plant-right place
2. Water efficiently
3. Mulch
4. Recycle yard waste
5. Fertilize appropriately
6. Control yard pests responsibly
7. Reduce storm water runoff
8. Attract wildlife
9. Protect waterfront

### **Suggested Activities:**

Check the internet for sources of native plants and information for their use. The South Carolina Native Plant Society is a great starting place. Specialty nurseries have many native plants to offer and provide good advice as to their use in your home landscape design. If using a professional landscape designer, ask to have natives in your landscape plan.

**Suggested Materials:**

Three native shrubs for a shady border are; oakleaf hydrangea, bottlebrush buckeye, all the native azaleas and beautyberry. For lists of native plants for South Carolina –search the internet, native plants-South Carolina.

[HGIC 1717, Plants that Tolerate Drought](#)

[HGIC 1723, Creating an Environmentally Responsible Landscape](#)

[HGIC 1700, Attracting & Feeding Songbirds](#)

[HGIC 1724, Conserving Water in Your Landscape](#)

[HGIC 1716, Plants for Shade](#)

For information on a specific plant species visit [www.clemson.edu/hgic](http://www.clemson.edu/hgic)

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**Sources/References:**

South Carolina Native Plant Society – [scnps.org](http://scnps.org)

Mail Order Natives – [mailordernatives.com](http://mailordernatives.com)

Woodlanders, Aiken, SC – [woodlanders.net](http://woodlanders.net) 803-648-7522

Bringing Nature Home – [bringingnaturehome.com](http://bringingnaturehome.com)

<http://www.usna.usda.gov/Gardens/faqs/nativefaq2.html>

(The US National Arboretum)