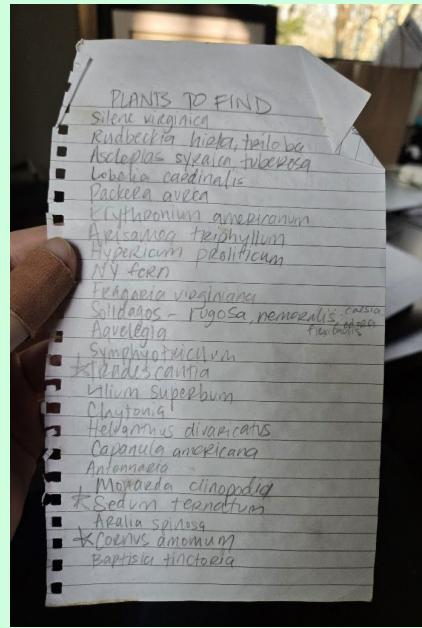


**Problematic plants - and some great natives to take their place in our gardens and nurseries!**



100







Our gardens aren't isolated —they're part of a much bigger system. The plants we choose affect pollinators, birds, soil life, water quality..

So when we swap out a problem plant for a native one, we're not just changing a landscape—we're rebuilding habitat



# Why do we call some plants problematic?



*Why does a garden center sell a plant?*

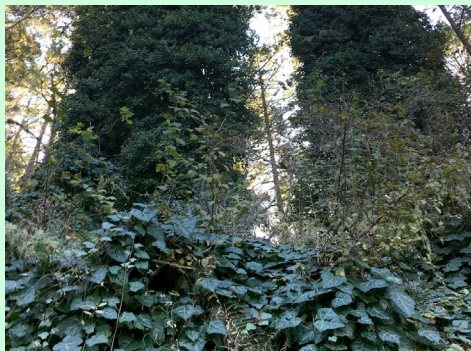
Beautiful or interesting textures and colors, fast growing, tough, disease and pest resistant, highly productive

But some of these “go -to” plants come with hidden costs.

A problem plant is one that:

- Escapes cultivation and spreads into wild areas
- Outcompetes native species
- Provides little value to local wildlife
- Can alter soil chemistry or habitat structure

Not all are officially invasive but many are *ecologically unhelpful at best*.





# Invasive, Non-Native Plant Species Lists - Revised 11/7/2023

This list has been compiled with input from representatives of the NC Natural Heritage Program, USDA Forest Service, NC Botanical Garden, NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, NC Native Plant Society, NC Invasive Plant Council, and other groups & individuals.

*Click on the “+” to expand the list to see the invasive species in each category.*

<b>+ Rank 1 - Severe Threat</b>
<b>+ Rank 2 - Significant Threat</b>
<b>+ Rank 3 - Lesser Threat</b>
<b>+ Watch List A</b>
<b>+ Watch List B</b>



We are so lucky to be here  
in Southern Appalachia



<b>INVASIVE SPECIES</b>	<b>NATIVE ALTERNATIVES</b>
Kudzu ( <i>Pueraria montana</i> )	Passion Flower ( <i>Passiflora incarnata</i> ) or Muscadine Grape ( <i>Vitis rotundifolia</i> )
English Ivy ( <i>Hedera Helix</i> )	Virginia Creeper ( <i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i> )
Japanese Honeysuckle ( <i>Lonicera japonica</i> )	Coral Honeysuckle ( <i>Lonicera sempervirens</i> )
Multiflora Rose ( <i>Rosa multiflora</i> )	Native Black Raspberry ( <i>Rubus occidentalis</i> )
Mimosa ( <i>Albizia julibrissin</i> )	Flowering Dogwood ( <i>Cornus florida</i> )
Bradford Pear ( <i>Pyrus calleryana</i> )	Sugar Maple ( <i>Acer saccharum</i> )
Burning bush ( <i>Euonymus alatus</i> )	Aromatic sumac ( <i>Rhus aromatica</i> )
Autumn Olive ( <i>Elaeagnus umbellata</i> )	Sweet pepperbush ( <i>Clethra alnifolia</i> )
Chinese Silvergrass ( <i>Miscanthus sinensis</i> )	Indian Grass ( <i>Sorghastrum nutans</i> )
Princess Tree ( <i>Paulownia tomentosa</i> )	Redbud ( <i>Cercis canadensis</i> )
Tree-of-heaven ( <i>Ailanthus altissima</i> )	Staghorn Sumac ( <i>Rhus typhina</i> )
Leatherleaf Mahonia ( <i>Berberis bealei</i> )	Doghobble ( <i>Leucothoe fontanesiana</i> )

Let's look at a few plants that are commonly sold —and what we can grow instead that does more for the world around us.

If you're gardening here, it helps to lean into what naturally thrives in our conditions—cooler temperatures, acidic soils, and variable moisture.



WHY do we like this plant in a garden, and how do we fill that role with a native??



## Bradford pear:

We liked: Early bloom, showy bloom, fast growth, hardy and adaptable

### Better Options:

*Amelanchier laevis* (Serviceberry)



and *Cercis canadensis* (Redbud) —you still get beautiful blooms, plus food for birds and pollinators — and yourself!





## Burning bush *Euonymus alatus*

We like: incredible fall color, dense structure

Better Options: *Itea virginica* or *Vaccinium corymbosum*





## Japanese Barberry     *Berberis thunbergii*

We like: low maintenance, showy berries and foliage, deer resistant

Better options: Inkberry Holly ( *Ilex glabra* ), Black Chokecherry ( *Aronia melanocarpa* ), or Black Huckleberry ( *Gaylussacia baccata* )

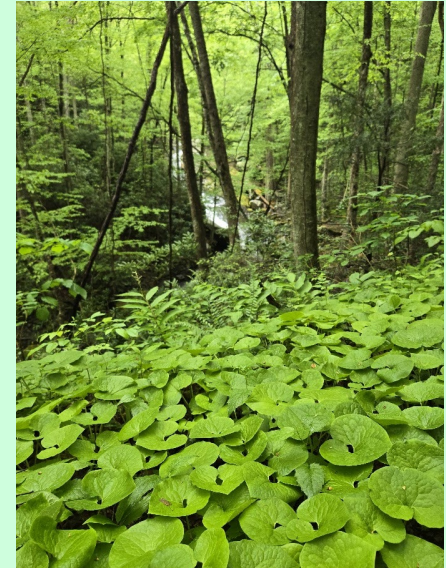
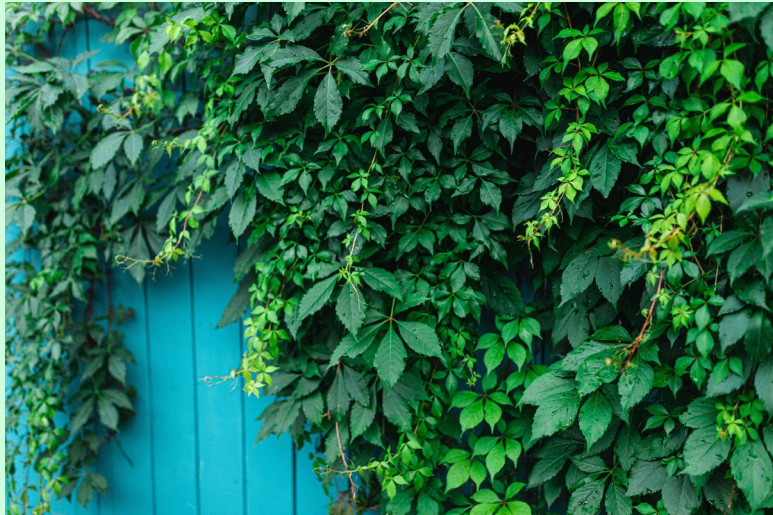


# English Ivy *Hedera helix*

We like: groundcover, spreads and climbs, grows on slopes

Better options:

Virginia Creeper for climbing, Golden Ragwort for a slope, Wild Ginger for a shady lush mat of vegetation.



# Butterfly Bush

What we like: attracts butterflies, long bloom time, fragrant and showy

Better option: Summersweet (*Clethra alnifolia*)

Blazing Star (*Liatris spicata*)

Milkweed (*Asclepias* spp.): *A. tuberosa* (Butterfly -weed) and *A. incarnata* (Swamp milkweed)



# Nandina domestica

What we like: showy red berries, highly adaptable and tough, fall color

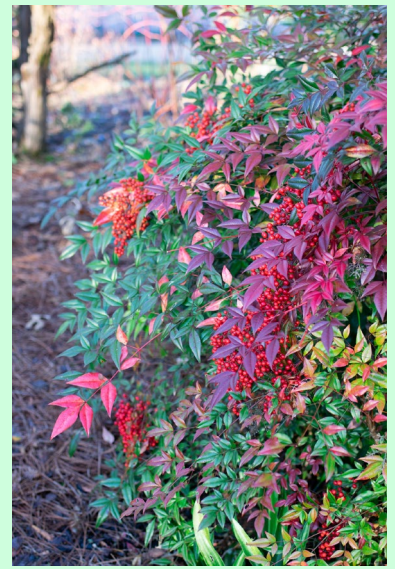
## Better options:

American Beautyberry *Callicarpa americana*

Winterberry *Ilex verticillata*

Red Chokeberry *Aronia arbutifolia*

Aromatic Sumac *Rhus aromatica*





# Chinese Fountain Grass (*Pennisetum alopecuroides*)

What we like: upright structure

Better options:

Little Bluestem, Yellow Indiangrass, or Switchgrass



## Liriope muscari

What we like: clumping, grassy texture, evergreen

Better options:

Sedges like Seersucker Sedge, Blue-eyed Grass, or Dwarf Crested Iris



# Norway Maple

What we like: great dense canopy, seasonal color, robust

Better options:

Sugar Maple, Shagbark Hickory, or a native Oak





## Hellebores

What we like: evergreen, deer resistant, early bloom

Better options:

Christmas Fern ( *Polystichum acrostichoides* ), Foamflower ( *Tiarella cordifolia* ), Woodland Stonecrop ( *Sedum ternatum* )





# Chipping Away – just do what you can!

- Replace one shrub at a time
- Add native layers (groundcover → shrub → canopy)
- Let leaves stay (habitat!)

## Working with Nurseries

Encourage change by:

- Asking for native options
- Supporting native plant sales
- Sharing success stories

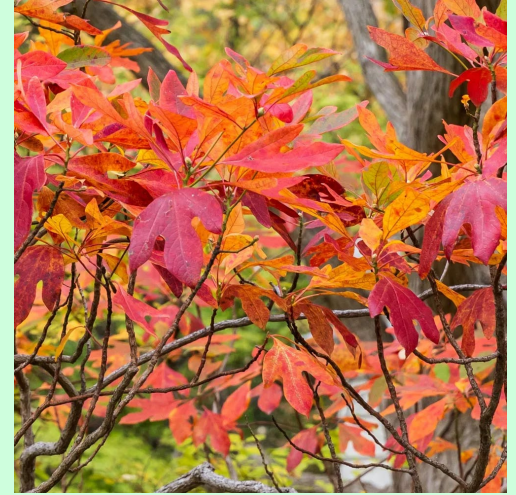
Demand shapes supply.

Nurseries respond to what people ask for.

So when you request native plants—or choose them when they're available—you're helping shift what's offered in the future.



# Other amazing natives we're loving in the Cobey Botanical Garden...





A garden can be more than beautiful —it can be a hub for biodiversity and resilience.

By choosing the right plants, we're not just gardening—we're helping sustain one of the most diverse ecosystems in North America.

# Plant Sales?

Daniel Boone Native Gardens  
plant sale: May 16 and 20

Asheville Botanical Garden plant  
sale: May 15 and 16

Watauga Extension plant sales

More?? Please let me know!!



# Local Nurseries

\*this is certainly not a comprehensive list!



CAROLINA  
NATIVE  
NURSERY



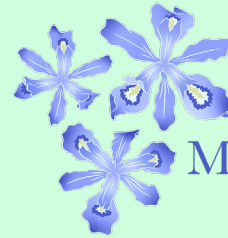
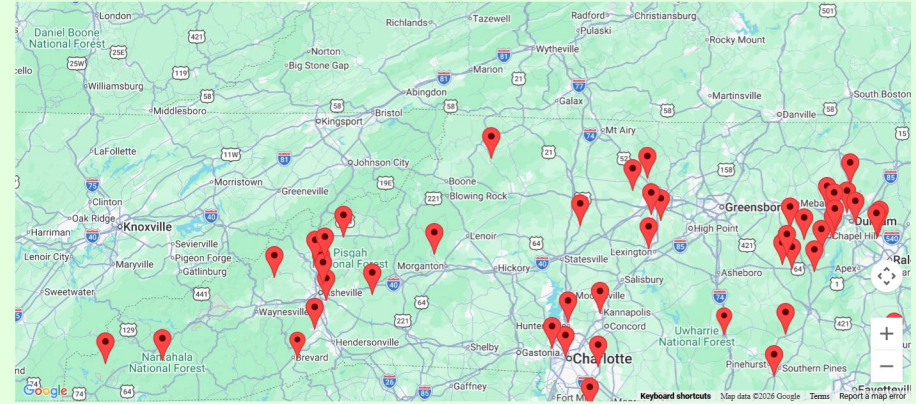
BUG LOVERS  
NATIVE PLANTS



Flower Moon  
NURSERY

## North Carolina Native Plant Nursery Map

*We recommend that you set up an appointment before visiting a nursery.*



Magna Silva Gardens

# Other Resources:

Plant Range Maps: Biota of North America Project (BONAP) maps

Weakley's Flora of the Southeast

[NC Extension Gardener Toolbox](#)

[Xerces Society](#)

If you want a list of native plants in the Cobey Botanical Garden, or a list of nurseries where I have successfully purchased native plants, please email me at

[etrott@grandfather.com](mailto:etrott@grandfather.com)

