

the NATURALIST CORNER

Brought to you by Peggy Potts and Cathy Ruff
Coastal Master Naturalists

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As graduates of the Coastal Master Naturalist Program offered through the Clemson University Cooperative Extension, we would like to share our excitement and enthusiasm about the many wonders of nature that can be enjoyed and experienced in the lowcountry. Through this monthly column, we will share our observations, sightings, and characteristics about a variety of nature topics, such as common insects, migrating birds and butterflies, wildflowers and plants and more. Basically, anything in nature is fair game to learn about and explore.

We also encourage you to share your observations and experiences so that we can learn about our natural world together. Please feel free to send in pictures and/or information of anything you find interesting by emailing Peggy Potts at ppotts@charlestoncounty.org.

Choose Native! By: Peggy Potts



The spring season is ushered in with an influx of customers to local nurseries purchasing products and plants for their yards. The colorful blooming flowers are hard to resist as we exit out of the dreary doldrums of

winter. But, when selecting plants, flowers, shrubs, or trees for your yard, consider choosing native species.

Native plants are those that occur naturally in the region in which they evolved. Without these plants and the insects that co-evolved with them, local birds cannot survive. Many other species of wildlife depend on native plants as well, such as the iconic monarch butterfly, and an array of other butterflies and moths. They also provide nectar for pollinators including hummingbirds and bees.

Unfortunately, the choices offered by many nurseries include non-native ornamentals for plantings. Some non-native plants can become invasive to

the native species and can wipe them out completely along with valuable food sources, which they provide for wildlife. As more development occurs, land is being cleared of native plants which is why it is crucial to communicate the importance of using native plants when replanting in those areas.

According to the SC Native Plant Society, native plants:

- adapt to normal weather extremes;
- provide food and shelter for 15 times as many species of native wildlife as non-native plants;
- obtain the moisture they need from rain, while a 1000 square foot lawn requires 10,000 gallons of water per summer to keep it green;
- require less motorized equipment, while lawn mowers and trimmers emit up to 34 more hydrocarbon than a typical car;
- help to blend our land and buildings into the surrounding environment, creating a landscape that

is regional, unique, and beautiful.

To obtain a list of native plants, visit the SC Native Plant Society website at <http://scnps.org/contact-us/> and email the representatives listed under the Lowcountry

"Restoring native plant habitat is vital to preserving biodiversity. By creating a native plant garden, each patch of habitat becomes part of a collective effort to nurture and sustain the living landscape for birds and other animals."

- National Audubon Society.

Chapter.

Charleston County Greenbelt Program

A wonderful place to see native plants, as well as a variety of birds and butterflies, is Roxbury Park located off of SC-174. The Greenbelt Program provided funding for this park which is owned and managed by the Town of Meggett. Visit Roxbury Park's website for information about hours of operation and more at www.roxburypark.org. Visit the Greenbelt Program website at <http://charlestoncountygreenbelt.org> and follow us on Instagram and the County's Facebook page. Don't forget you can earn "Lifestyle Loot" through the Wellness Program when you visit a Greenbelt site and post pictures using #ccgreenbelt.