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Landscaping trends across the United States are changing from imported ornamentals to native plant materials. From parks to gardens to yards to deck containers, the focus is on plants known as “natives” that long ago adapted to the local climate, soil, insects, and disease.

The benefits of native plants range from less upkeep, attracting and supporting pollinators, reduced watering needs after they are established, limited fertilizer, and even less pesticides.

Learning what kind of plants are best suited to Middlesex is a step in the right direction. To assist you in this process, the Landscaping Committee is delighted to provide these native plant reference materials.

We thank the University of Delaware, the Delaware Center for Horticulture, and the Inland Bays Garden Center for their expertise and assistance.

For more information, please visit:

University of Delaware Botanic Gardens College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

https://www.udel.edu/canr

Delaware Center for Horticulture

https://thedch.org

Inland Bays Garden Center

https://www.inlandbaysgardencenter.com

Happy gardening!

Plants for a Livable Delaware

is a campaign to identify and promote superior plants that thrive without becoming invasive

A Livable Delaware plant must

- Possess adaptable characteristics to landscape situations (i.e. drought resistant, tolerant of poor soils, etc.)
- Pose no potential threat as an invasive plant
- Have no serious disease or insect problems
- Be hardy to Delaware

Livable Delaware Plants are identified at some garden centers, public gardens and natural areas in DE. They provide safe and desirable alternatives to invasive plants.

An invasive plant can quickly overwhelm and displace existing native plants by reducing the availability of light, water, nutrients and space. They have few, if any, natural controls to keep them in check. Ecologists now rank invasions by exotic plants, animals, and pathogens second only to habitat loss as a major threat to local biodiversity. Invasive plants may be introduced intentionally or by accident. Plants have been introduced to control erosion, provide wildlife food and habitat, or for ornamental value in gardens. A small but destructive group of ornamentals has escaped the garden and caused damage to forests, fields, wetlands, and waterways. Accidental introductions occur when people and goods travel worldwide. Packing materials can harbor seeds or plant parts. Japanese stilt grass, now a widely escaped groundcover in woodland edges, is a prime example.

Invasive plants can be divided into two categories—(1) those plants that were introduced but are no longer sold (for example, multiflora rose, autumn olive and oriental bittersweet) and (2) ornamental plants still grown and sold. The former are so aggressive that while few people are still planting them, these plants are abundant in natural or abandoned areas. The challenge with this category is to develop and implement effective controls.

This brochure focuses on invasive plants still sold and requested. The goal is to educate the gardening public about invasive plants and suggest desirable alternatives for home and commercial landscape use. The worst invasive plants produce large numbers of seed dispersed by wind, water, wildlife or people. Plants that spread aggressively by runners or underground stems can also be invasive, creating problems when planted close to natural areas.

A serious invader sold in a state or county where it seems harmless might eventually find its way (through catalog or Internet sales, informal seed swaps, or even as a cutting in Aunt Mary's purse) to regions where it will cause harm. The goal of this brochure is to promote primarily native alternatives to potentially invasive ornamental species allowing each individual gardener to choose desirable and safe plants for their gardens. Delaware natives, designated by symbol N on the accompanying lists, provide some of the best alternatives, not only because of their adaptability to the local conditions, but also because they provide opportunity to save and expand the regional beauty and refinement that is our natural heritage.

A team of scientists, naturalists and nursery industry professionals conducted assessments on many plants and developed an Official Delaware Invasive Plant List based on scientifically valid criteria. The following are descriptions of some of the worst invasive plants still sold in Delaware and the conditions under which they are most likely to cause problems. A list of suggested alternatives is included for each problem plant. The alternatives are suggested based on their ability to grow in similar environments and perform the same function in the garden, but may not possess identical ornamental characteristics. Once fully informed, each gardener can make his or her own decision about which plants to grow.

Problem: Norway Maple
Solution: Red maple (N)
European hornbeam
Katsuratree
Kentucky coffee tree
Sweet gum (N)
Black gum (N)
Swamp white oak (N)
Shingle oak (N)

Problem: Japanese Barberry
Solution: Slender Deutzia
Helleri holly
Virginia sweetspire (N)
Bayberry (N)
Eastern ninebark (N)
Fragrant sumac
Spirea 'Atrosanguinea'
Spirea 'Flaming Mound'
American Cranberrybush Vibernum
Highbush blueberry (N)

Problem: Winged Burning Bush
Solution: Red and black chokeberry (N)
Red twig dogwood (N)
Dwarf fothergilla
Winterberry holly (N)
Virginia sweetspire (N)
Smooth sumac (N)
Highbush blueberry (N)
Maple leaf viburum (N)
Arrowwood virburum (N)
Winterthur viburum (N)

Problem: Purple Loosestrife
Solution: Swamp milkweed (N)
Joe pye weed (N)
Blazing star, spike gayfeather (N)
Beebalm
Garden Phlox 'Robert Poore' or 'David' (N)
Obedient plant
Blue vervain (N)
New York ironweed (N)

Problem: Bradford Pear or Callery Pear
Solution: Serviceberry (N)
Fringetree (N)
Hawthorn 'Winter King' (N)
Carolina Silverbell (N)
Sourwood (N)
Japanese Stewartia
Flowering dogwood (N)
Crabapple
Okame cherry

Problem: Butterfly Bush
Solution: **Perennials**
Blue giant hyssop
Butterfly milkweed
Joe pye weed (N)
Woody plants
Sweetshrub
Sweet pepperbush (N)
Bottlebrush buckeye
Bush-honeysuckle (N)
Wild hydrangea (N)
Crape myrtle
Elderberry (N)

Problem: Privet
Solution: Glossy abelia
Red or black chokeberry (N)
Forsythia
Inkberry (N)
Bayberry (N)
Blackhaw viburnum (N)
Eastern ninebark 'Diablo' (N)
Spirea 'Snowmound'

Problem: Japanese silver grass
Solution: Silver bluestem (N)
Feather reed grass
Korean feather reed grass
Pink muhly grass
Lindheimer's muhly
Switchgrass 'Dallas Blues', 'Cloud Nine', 'Northwind' (N)
Indiangrass (N)
Frost grass

Problem: Periwinkle
Solution: Bearberry (N)

White heath aster (N)
Allegheny pachysandra (N)
Virginia creeper (N)
Christmas fern (N)
Sweetbox
Lowbush blueberry (N)
Barren-strawberry (N)
Yellowroot (N)

Problem: English Ivy
Solution: for English ivy include those suggested for periwinkle plus:
Wood aster (N)
Variegated sedge 'Silk Tassel', or 'Ice Dance'
Plumbago, leadwort
Goldenstar
Lily-of-the-valley
Hay-scented fern (N)
Geranium
Lilyturf, liriope
Variegated Solomon's seal (N)

Notes:
N = Native to Delaware

Excerpted from ***Plants for a Livable Delaware***
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