

Native Plants for Shady Locations

Flowering Perennials,
Grasses, & Ferns

Shrubs & Small Trees

Introduction:

The Turtle Creek Watershed Association promotes the use of rainfall and stormwater as the valuable natural resource it is.

We encourage measures to manage stormwater in ways that preserve or mimic natural infiltration or storage methods, thus allowing the rain to slowly reach our streams or ground water table. This prevents damage from erosion, sedimentation, sewer overflows, and flooding.

Gardens can be a good way to help manage stormwater. Their soils contain lots of organic matter that absorbs rainfall before it can run off. Plants take in water through their roots and transpire gallons of it each day through their leaves. These roots along with soil organisms such as earthworms and burrowing insects create tunnels that also allow water to infiltrate.

Native plants are well-adapted to local conditions. Relying upon them as the backbone of your garden is a good way to insure beautiful success while reducing maintenance chores. As noted in their descriptions, they often have value to wildlife (that prey upon harmful insects), and many were once used as medicines or dyes – beautiful as well as practical.

Limiting use of harsh chemical fertilizers and pesticides will protect beneficial organisms, allowing them to help you improve your soil and keep harmful insects in check. This will also reduce the amounts of these pollutants entering our streams and ground water. Relying upon integrated pest management approaches and upon milder fertilizers can also save money.

Gardeners who use rain barrels or cisterns to hold and store roof runoff have a source of pure water for their gardens – and can save money while reducing the volume of stormwater that causes local problems.

The following information is a
distillation of lists from:
US EPA, USDA, Pa DEP,
Brooklyn Botanical Garden,
Connecticut Botanic Garden,
Missouri Botanic Garden, and
Pennsylvania Native Plant Society

Please note: Specific genus and species names are important to obtain the correct plants. (That being true, as research into genetic relationships continues, genus names change from time to time to more accurately reflect these relationships.) Even so, all plants will not grow in all locations. Success depends upon light conditions, soil components and substrate, soil pH, soil nutrients, total water, animal activities, and proximity to roads (and road salt), among other factors. Determine conditions in your garden, then choose the plants best suited to your site.



Cimicifuga racemosa (bugbane)

- 40"-60"; white flower stalks in July and August; large compound leaves with dark red tinges.
- Grows in shady spots in fertile, damp soils.
- Used as an estrogen replacement and pain reducer.
- Attracts beneficial insects; attracts butterflies.

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Clelone oblique (rose turtlehead) or
C. glabra (white turtlehead)

- 24"-30"; pink or white flowers August - September.
- Grows in damp, partly shaded spots in rich, slightly acidic soils; likes leaf compost.
- Attracts butterflies.



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Equisetum arvense (field horsetail)

- 24"-30"; primitive plant with no flowers, but beige "cones;" tiny green leaves form horizontal tufts at each stem node.
- Grows in a variety of damp soils from sun to shade.
- Used to stop bleeding, heal wounds and bones.
- Great accent plant; grow in containers to keep within bounds.

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Geranium maculatum (wild geranium, cranesbill)

- 12"-15"; deeply cleft leaves; rosy purple to blue flowers in late May to early June.
- Prefers to grow in open or partial shade/partial sun in loose loamy soils with a nearly neutral pH.
- Used medicinally for digestive ailments, skin infections, and to clot open wounds.
- Birds and butterfly larvae eat the fruit. Deer may eat the leaves.



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Heuchera americana (coral bells)

- 12"-24"; white or pink flowers in July; low green foliage with white to rusty tones.
- Grows in sunny to partially shady sites in average soil; some drought tolerance.
- Powdered roots used to sprinkle on wounds.
- Nectar source for hummingbirds and butterflies.



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Iris versicolor

- 18"-24"; blue, purple, pink, white, or yellow flowers in June and July.
- Grows in partial shade in rich, damp soils.
- Used as emetic.
- Attracts hummingbirds.

Lobelia cardinalis (red cardinal flower)

- 24"-30"; red flower stalks in July and August.
- Prefers rich soils, consistently damp soils in partial shade; protect from deer browsing.
- Used to treat skin sores.
- Attracts butterflies and hummingbirds.



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Mitchella repens (partridge berry)

- 6"; white double flowers in June; evergreen ground cover; red berries.
- Grows in slightly acidic soils; tolerates some dry conditions.
- Used to aid childbirth.
- Birds and mammals eat the bitter berries.



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Monarda didyma* or *M. fistulosa (bee balm or bergamot)

- 36"; red to pink to purple flowers from July to August.
- Grows in full sun to partial shade in damp, fertile soil, forming clumps.
- Used as an anti-septic for wounds and throat infections.
- Attracts butterflies and hummingbirds.

Osmunda cinnamomea (cinnamon fern)

- 24"-30"; spores on brown spikes in July;
- Grows in partial shade in damp, acidic to neutral soils.
- Gelatinous root substance used to treat coughs.
- Provides good bird and amphibian cover.



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Osmunda claytoniana (interrupted fern)

- 24"-30"; spores form in middle of fronds.
- Grows in partial shade in damp, acidic soils.
- No known medicinal uses; fiddleheads inedible.
- Mature clumps provides good cover.

Osmunda regalis (royal fern)

- 24"-30"; spores clusters form at the tips of fronds.
- Grows in partial shade in damp, acidic soils.
- Gelatinous root substance used to treat coughs (superior to *O. cinnamomea*).
- Provides good bird and amphibian cover.



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Podophyllum petatum (May apple)

- 14"; white flowers in April and May; colonies of palmate "umbrella" leaves; green then yellow "apples."
- Grows in moist, fertile soils in partial shade; dormant in late summer.
- Used carefully as antibiotic.
- Fruits eaten by wildlife.

Polemonium reptans (Jacob's ladder)

- 12"; blue flowers in May and June;
- Prefers moist, fertile soil in partial shade.
- Used as astringent for insect bites and to treat coughs.
- Nectar plant for insects.



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Sanguinaria canadensis (blood root)

- 6"; white flowers in May; reddish orange sap in roots.
- Grows in fertile soils in sun to shade; looks best massed in groups; goes dormant in summer.
- Used as a dye; also used to remove skin tumors, but will kill skin tissues.
- Seeds spread by ants

Sedum ternatum (whorled stonecrop)

- 6"; white flowers May to June.
- Grows well in sun or shade in a variety of soils, and in pockets of soil in rocky sites. Drought tolerant.
- Good nectar plant.



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Thelypteris noveboracensis (New York fern)

- 12"-18"; yellow green fronds.
- Needs slightly damp, rich, lightly acidic soils in partial shade.
- Wildlife eat fiddleheads.



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Tiarella cordifolia (foam flower)

- 12"-15"; white flowers in June; forms clumps.
- Prefers to grow in partial shade in damp, loose, loamy soils with a pH between 6.5 and 8.5.
- Used medicinally for mild digestive ailments, skin and eye infections.
- Attracts butterflies.

Viola canadensis (white violet)

Viola sororia (common blue violet)

- 6"-8"; blue / white flowers in April and May.
- Prefers moist, humusy, neutral soils; sun to open shade.
- Used as pain reliever; edible, ornamental flowers.
- Attracts butterflies.



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Clethra alnifolia (sweet pepperbush)

- 4'-6'; white flower spires in August.
- Grows in slightly acidic, damp, well-drained soils in partial shade.
- Used as soap substitute
- Attracts butterflies.



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Cephalanthus occidentalis (button bush)

- 6'-12'; white flowers in June; interesting seed balls.
- Prefers wet soils in sun to partial shade.
- Used in small amounts to reduce inflammation.
- Attracts butterflies; seeds eaten by birds.

Cornus florida (flowering dogwood)

- 20'-25'; showy white flowers in May; red berries in late summer.
- Grows in damp, lightly acidic, fertile soils in partial shade. (prone to disease when stressed)
- Used as astringent, digestive aid, and red dye.
- Seeds eaten by birds and squirrels.



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Hamamelis virginiana (witch hazel)

- 15'; delicate yellow flowers in October.
- Prefers richly organic, moist soils, but is very adaptable once established.
- Used as a skin astringent to treat inflammation, insect bites, etc.
- Attractive bird nesting sites and a late season nectar source for insects.



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K. angustifolia (sheep laurel)

- 2'- 3'; pinkish flowers in June below branch tips; broadleaf evergreen; deer resistant.
- Prefers partial shade and damp, loose, acidic soils.
- Leaf infusion used topically to slow bleeding and to relieve pain and inflammation.
- Leaves toxic when ingested.

Kalmia latifolia (mountain laurel)

- 5'- 8'; pinkish to white flowers in June; broadleaf evergreen; deer resistant; Pennsylvania state flower.
- Prefers partial shade and damp, loose, acidic soils.
- Leaf infusion used topically to relieve pain and inflammation.
- Leaves toxic when ingested.



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Lindera benzoin (spicebush)

- 6'-8'; fragrant yellow flowers in May; red berries in fall on female plants.
- Good damp understory shrub; prefers loamy soils.
- Used to treat colds, coughs, and parasites.
- Host plant for butterfly larvae; birds eat berries.

Staphylea trifolia (bladdernut)

- 15'-20'; white flower clusters in May; unusual seed pods in fall.
- Prefers medium, damp yet well drained soils; partial shade.
- Used for edible oil from seeds.
- Bird habitat.



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Sambucus canadensis (elderberry)

- 6'-10'; white flower clusters in June; purple berries.
- Widely adaptable, but prefers damp, medium soils in sun or partial shade.
- Used as a stimulant, insecticide, and dye; nutritious, tart berries.
- Attracts butterflies; birds eat fruit.

Viburnum dentatum (arrowwood) *Viburnum nudum* (witherod)
Viburnum prunifolium (blackhaw)

- 5'; white, fragrant, flat clusters in May; dark blue berries in August.
- Grows in sun or open shade in slightly damp conditions, but is adaptable to many soil types.
- Fruits rich in vitamin C.
- Attracts butterflies and birds.



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