

Welcome to the *Blooming Garden Native Plant Toolkit!*

This toolkit is designed in 3 parts and is designed to be a strong reference tool to use in your native plant planning and design process!

A) Researching Native Species

There are over 3000 species of native plants in Alabama (Source: Alabama Wildlife Federation). Determining which plants are compatible with your site is the first step in planning native plant habitats! Identifying which native species and invasive species are already present can be a good indicator of the types of plant communities that already exist on your property. The following links are references that you can use to see growing conditions and geographical distribution of native species!

#1 Wildflower.org

Link: <https://www.wildflower.org/plants/>

This database can be used to type in any common or scientific name to pull up information on a specific native plant. Info on site requirements (such as light requirements, soil requirements, moisture requirements), as well as info on a plants bloom time, bloom color, seeding times, wildlife value, and traditional uses / medicinal properties can be found in this database. You can also search by the 'advanced search' tab to search by specific states, light conditions, colors, and soil conditions.

#2 Alabama Plant Atlas

Link: <http://floraofalabama.org/>

Alabama Plant Atlas is a great resource to use when trying to determine the locality of specific native plants. Typing a native plant into this atlas will display the counties where the species is documented to be found. Alternatively you can click on your county to display all the native plants found in your county!

#3 Xerces Society

Link: <https://www.xerces.org/pollinator-resource-center/southeast>

The Xerces Society provides a myriad of pollinator conservation resources through their website. Here you can find links to material to aid in site assessments, plannings, species selections, and connect with native plant seed and plant distributors.

[Species List \(Pollinators\)](#)

[Species List \(Monarch Nectar Plants\)](#)

B) Planning, Management, & Invasives

Identifying non-native species is important to successful native plant restoration. These are species that can potentially outcompete their native counterparts and occupy their ecological niche. It can be challenging during the establishment period if non-native aggressive species are ignored. Successful removal of non-native flora can be done by removing the plant by the root (mechanical), cutting and painting the invasive plant with herbicide (chemical), or by covering the ground with cardboard or plastic (only with grasses/turf).

Additionally there are some native species that are prolific in their seeding and can spread faster than anticipated when introduced to a new area. It is important to research the life history strategies of the native plants you choose to use to understand the dynamics they will have when planted together.

#1 USFS Invasive Plants in Southern Forests

Link: https://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/qtr/qtr_srs119.pdf

This is the US Forest Service Reference for identifying and managing non-native species. This is the guide you can use to identify which species you may not want to keep on your property as your native plant garden continues to grow.

#2 Nature Conservancy Restoration Guidelines

While not everyone may be restoring a grassland, the principles of this document translate well to homeowners as well. By following the outlined steps of this pdf it can give a good timeline of management activities to take to insure the success of your restoration endeavor!

The steps are as follows (Source: Nature.org)

Site Assessment— Identify the site characteristics and define goals for the restoration.

Vegetation Removal – Remove existing weeds and undesired vegetation from the site to prevent aggressive weedy species from out-competing native meadow plants.

Seedbed Preparation – Prepare a seedbed to ensure good seed-soil contact and promote germination of planted seeds.

Seeding/Planting – Select seed mixes and seeding methods that are well suited to the site and project goals. Or, in the case of small sites of less than half an acre, consider hand-planting plugs for quicker results.

Hydrologic Restoration – Remove drainage features by breaking tile or plugging ditches to restore the site's original soil moisture and seasonal flooding patterns.

Establishment & Aftercare – Control weeds and promote the establishment and growth of meadow plants through the first few years after seeding. (Source: Nature.org)

Link:

<https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/Restoration-Guide-Woody-Invasive-to-Conservation-Meadow.pdf>

#3 Alabama Wildlife Federation

The Alabama Outdoor Classroom Conservation Education Program provides a great resource to use as reference when deciding which plants to add versus which plants to remove. The Alabama Wildlife Federation makes a strong case to increase the biodiversity on your property and provides a list of the top 15 non-native plants to avoid at the bottom of the webpage.

Link: <https://www.alabamawildlife.org/learn-about-alabamas-plants-upper/>

C) Connect Locally and Regionally!

Associating with other native plant organizations can help depending on what your goals and objectives are. The following are some native plant groups you may want to check out as you continue your native plant project

#1 Land Trust of North Alabama

Link: <https://landtrustna.org/>

The Land Trust of North Alabama is experimenting with many new and exciting native plant projects. They already have several pollinator demonstration gardens (Blevins Gap, Harvest Square Preserve) and are creating more in the 2024 season! They are a great organization to connect with to hike out into many of our native ecosystems with and also provide regular hikes, classes, and workshops!

#2 Georgia Native Plant Society

Link: <https://gnps.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GeorgiaNativePlant/>

Instagram: @Usinggeorgianativeplants
@GeorgiaNativePlantsSociety

The Georgia Native Plant Society and their social media (facebook / instagram) are excellent references to use for Alabama as well. Many of our native species overlap and the members of GNPS continue to be very active in communicating the importance, value, and coolness of the native plants in our region.

3# North Alabama Native Plants FB Group

The North Alabama Native Plant FB Group is readily accepting new members and has grown from 3k to 8k members in almost 1 year! This is a good group to join to connect with other native plant enthusiasts locally.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/789978408593210/>

Citations:

“Upper Grades Ecosystem Investigation: Alabama’s Native Plants: AWF.” *Alabama Wildlife Federation* | AWF, www.alabamawildlife.org/learn-about-alabamas-plants-upper/. Accessed Apr. 2024.

“Restoring your woody- invaded meadow to conservation” (April 2024)

<https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/Restoration-Guide-Woody-Invaded-to-Conservation-Meadow.pdf>