

Riverbend Naturalist

Riverbend Naturalist is the newsletter from the Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB). Riverbend Park is located at 9700 Potomac Hills Street, Great Falls VA 22066. Phone: 703-759-9018

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Please join us for the 5th Annual Great Falls Bluebell Benefit, on June 3rd from 6-9pm to support Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB).

The event will take place at the Riverbend Park Visitor Center. Come have some fun, meet your friends and neighbors, and help preserve the park's resources for generations to come! Sign up on the FORB website: <http://www.forb.wildapricot.org>.

Approximately 95% of the ticket proceeds go directly to the park. Ticket prices are tax deductible above \$20 per person; donations are 100% tax deductible.

DON'T MISS THE NATIVE PLANT SALE

FORB's Annual Native Plant Sale is at the Grange Pavillion on Saturday, April 29th from 8am to 11am. Buy and plant natives in your yard or garden. Read more about harmful invasive species within.

Save Saturday, April 29th for FORB's annual Native Plant Sale from 8am – 11am at the Great Falls Grange, 9818 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls, VA 22066.

We will have a variety of Virginia wildflowers, including bluebells, ferns, and other plants. This is a major fund-raiser for FORB, so come by and fill the empty spaces in your garden. Proceeds help support the educational programs at Riverbend Park.

Brush up on your Latin Roots and Buy our Natural Roots—Here is the Plant list for the Native Plant sale!

MERTENSIA VIRGINICA
 SPIGELIA MARILANDICA
 CALISSIA MORNING
 GRACE
 CAMASSIA CUSICKII
 ANEMONE CANADENSIS
 AMSONIA BLUE ICE
 STYLOPHORUM DIPHYLLUM
 ASCLEPIAS
 GAY BUTTERFLIES
 PHLOX DIVARICATUS

HEUCHERA AMERICANA
 AQUILEGIA CANADENSIS
 DRYOPTERIS MARGINALIS --EASTERN WOOD FERN
 ADIANTUM PEDATUM --NORTHERN MAIDENHAIR FERN
 ATHYRIUM FELIX FEMINA --LADY FERN
 IRIS CRISTATA
 CHELONE TINY TORTUGA
 TIARELLA COL WHERRYI T
 IARELLA CORDIFOLIA
 CHRYSOGONUM VIRGINIANM
 SISYRINCHIUM SUWANNEE
 SENECEO AUREUS

(The following article is a reprint from last year. Planting Virginia natives, and removing or avoiding invasive alien plants is a better strategy, because many of them crowd out or are destructive to native plants. Some of these aliens are well known plants, and are identified in the article below. -Ed.)

Go Native: Avoid Invasive Alien Plant Species

By Conservation Currents, Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District

Alien plants, also known as exotic or nonnative species, were intentionally or inadvertently introduced usually, but not always, by human activity into a region in which they did not evolve. In North America, plant species are generally described as native if they occurred here prior to European settlement. Some may have been introduced for horticultural purposes. Others arrived accidentally in seed mixes, packaging materials, ship ballast, and even on the shoes of international travelers. Within the United States, a plant native to one area may be carried to another part of the country and be labeled an alien species.

Native species are those that do occur in the region in which they evolved. They possess characteristics that make them uniquely adapted to local environmental conditions. Natives maintain or improve soil fertility, reduce erosion, and often require less fertilizer and pesticides than alien species.

Invasive alien plants threaten biodiversity. Biodiversity refers to the variety of all living things and their interconnectedness. As a general rule, the more biodiverse an ecosystem is, the healthier it is. Less diverse ecosystems are more fragile and less resilient in the face of threats like the introduction of new species. Without natural controls such as insect pests and competitors, some alien plants easily can become established in new areas. Once established, the alien plant species can out-compete and displace the native plant species, disrupting ecological processes and significantly degrading entire plant communities.

Take a ride south on I-95 and you will see kudzu, a fast growing vine that is blanketing the landscape, choking off trees and dependent wildlife in its path. Here in Fairfax County, invasive oriental bittersweet grows along I-66 from Arlington to Fairfax. Mile-a-minute plagues our stream valleys. Garlic mustard threatens wooded areas. And phragmites runs rampant in wet areas such as ponds and drainage ditches.

All plants are native to some region and offer a variety of ecological, economic, and aesthetic benefits. It is only when a species is out of place that we should become concerned. Like a wildfire, invasive plants can seriously damage native plant and animal communities, increase soil erosion and sedimentation, and interfere with outdoor recreation. However, unlike wildfire damage, which soon heals, the effects of plant invasions can be long lasting. **As biological pollutants, invasive plant populations can grow, adapt, multiply, and spread to unmanageable levels over time.**

How can you help? Use native plant species grown from local stock for conservation and landscaping purposes whenever possible. If you do use alien plants, avoid highly invasive species. The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation in partnership with the Virginia Native Plant Society provides a comprehensive list of plant species native to Virginia.

Jon Boat and Kayak Rentals start in May 19th and go to October 8th. Canoes and rowboats: Half Day Rental \$18. Full Day Rental \$30. Single Kayak: Half Day \$15. Single Kayak: Full Day and Tandem Kayaks: Half Day \$25, Full Day \$35. Call 703-222-4664 to sign up for Kayak rental qualification classes.

Riverbend Park Summer Programs

Thanks to your generous support of FORB, we are able, this year, to provide \$15,000 for Riverbend's very popular summer programs. Some of these programs, such as the Primitive Camps, are almost full within a short time of registration going on-line. This year Riverbend will be hiring 6 college-level students to support the summer programs, including one student focusing primarily on the Primitive Camps and the Fishing Program.