

PLANT VIRGINIA NATIVES INITIATIVE

Plant Virginia Natives



The Plant Virginia Natives Initiative includes two facets: a statewide marketing partnership and regional native plant marketing campaigns.

Regional Native Plant Campaigns

The regional native plant marketing model uses proven Community-Based Social Marketing tools and techniques, and focuses on establishing a social norm for use of native plants in the rural, suburban and urban landscape. It is based on research funded and conducted through the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program that identified structural and psychological barriers that may prevent people planting natives, including:

- lack of information about which plant species are native
- lack of knowledge of the interdependence between native plants and animals
- lack of availability of native plants at retail centers
- lack of, or knowledge of, publicly accessible demonstration sites showcasing native landscaping

The regional native plant campaigns address the following **goals**:

- Increase the knowledge and use of plants native to the region, according to the Flora of Virginia.
- Help landowners learn more about their property and the benefits of a native plant landscape and conservation landscaping, and how by planting natives they can impact the ecological diversity and sustainability of natural landscapes beyond their property, neighborhood, and community.
- Engage with local garden centers in the region to promote the native plants they currently carry, and to increase the supply and variety of the native plants they carry.
- Engage with local jurisdictions on policies that could be strengthened in favor of native plant landscaping.

Regional native plant marketing campaigns also highlight and leverage partner resources and contributions, and create consistent messaging that promotes the use of native plants and provides a rallying point for partners.



Coastal regional native plant marketing campaigns, including regional guide production, initiated and funded in large part by grants from NOAA to the Virginia CZM Program, a network of state agencies and coastal localities led by DEQ. Maintaining and increasing valuable native vegetative cover is a critical goal shared by the Virginia CZM Program and the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, which collaborated with the Virginia CZM to conduct workshops to build the capacity of regional and local partners to expand the regional campaign model beyond Virginia's coastal zone and into the rest of the state. The Virginia Native Plant Society also has contributed significant funding for guide printing.



VIRGINIA REGIONAL CAMPAIGN MODEL: Community Based Social Marketing (CBSM) to Increase Native Plant Use

Statewide Problem/Issue:

Loss of Biodiversity - decline in native plant communities (loss and/or degradation of habitats) and associated decline of wildlife species & communities

Goal:

Increase the use of plants native to Virginia, and adoption of conservation landscaping practices.

How? Informed by Research:

HOW is dependent on **WHO** the identified audience(s) is, **WHY** they are not using native plants, **WHAT** message will get their attention, and **WHERE** they go for information. (CBSM is an audience-based and audience-driven approach.) Who, why, what and where are determined through research.

Research also identifies:

- **BARRIERS** to the audience using native plants (e.g., lack of knowledge, don't know where to get the plants, etc.)
- **BENEFITS** the audience would gain from use of native plants (e.g., what do they gain from gardening/landscaping - beauty, enjoy birds and butterflies - other wildlife, decrease in maintenance, etc.)
- Key words or language used by the audience(s)

Understanding - and not making assumptions about - **WHO**, **WHY**, **WHAT** and **WHERE** is critical to identifying which message will most resonate with the target audience(s) and **HOW** best to convey the message to this audience(s) and move them beyond awareness to action.

Research guides/informs design of a comprehensive campaign STRATEGY using CBSM TOOLS, that when used together, have been proven effective at changing behavior.

Regional campaigns in the coastal zone focus on the use of Three (3) CBSM TOOLS:

1. Captivating Communications
2. Prompts/ Point of Sale Materials
3. Commitments/ Social Norms

Each TOOL has multiple Components – see next page.

Virginia Regional Native Plant Campaigns



Community-Based Social Marketing Approach

Barriers	Tools
Lack of Motivation	Commitment Norms Incentives
Forget to Act	Prompts
Lack of Social Pressure	Norms
Lack of Knowledge	Communication Social Diffusion
Structural Barriers	Convenience

QUESTIONS? For consultation on using CBSM and the coastal regional native plant marketing campaigns, contact: Virginia Witmer, Virginia CZM Program, (804) 698-4320 or Virginia.Witmer@deq.virginia.gov.

VISIT www.PlantVirginiaNatives.org for more examples and resources.

STEPS:

Regional Campaign Design and Implementation

1. Identify the **REGION**

2. Identify **PARTNERS** to form a regional community-based team (these key leaders will become the Campaign Steering Committee, and coordinate with additional stakeholders). The partners **AGREE TO**:

- Share/ pool their existing **RESOURCES**, such as expertise and financial resources that may be used for campaign design and implementation;
- **REVIEW** the available data collected by the coastal campaigns and **DECIDE** whether or not to do research in your region (Virginia Witmer can provide the survey, if needed);
- Based on the research, **DECIDE** on **BRANDING** for your regional campaign, which consists of:
 - the Name of the Campaign (and Tag line),
 - a Logo (V. Witmer can provide assistance with design, if needed),
 - overall Messaging;
- **DESIGN** a **STRATEGY** using all 3 Tools to reach your Audience(s), using Components of each Tool that will be most practical, based on your resources and constraints.

3. After 1-3 Years, do a mid-campaign **EVALUATION** of your strategy to be certain that the overall design, and individual components of the strategy, are effectively reaching and affecting some change in your audience(s).

4. After 5 years, measure actual "Behavior Change." This can be done through a **SURVEY**.

TOOL: Captivating Communications



Vivid, personal, concrete.

- Know your Audience.
- Use a Credible Source.
- Frame your Message – this is how it is presented, in general, you should emphasize the losses that occur as a result of inaction
- Carefully Consider Threatening Messages - do so with caution - present concrete actions that individuals can take to reduce the threat.
- Make Your Message Easy to Remember.
- Provide Personal or Community Goals.
- Emphasize Personal Contact.
- Provide Feedback.

Example Campaign Strategy Components

- Regional Native Plant Guide Demonstration Gardens, Plant ID Markers and Interpretive Signage
- Radio Ads/PSAs
- Public TV Interviews
- PlantVirginiaNatives.org and Partner Websites
- Newspaper and Partner Publication Articles
- Social Media (the usual and NextDoor.com)
- Webinars
- Campaign Exhibits, Events & Presentations
- Scripted Campaign Presentation
- Inexpensive Give-Aways, e.g. native plant seed packets, and merchandise with campaign logo
- Targeted Brochures/Fact Sheets
- Yard Signs
- Videos

TOOL: Prompts - Point of Sale



Behaviors that support sustainability are susceptible to the most human of traits: forgetting.

- Make the prompt noticeable.
- Make the prompt self-explanatory.
- Present the prompt in as close proximity as is possible to where the action is to be taken.
- Use prompts to encourage people to engage in positive behaviors.

Example Campaign Strategy Components

Garden Center Banner or Flag

Advertises that center sells native plants.

Garden Center Plant Signage/Poster

Placed next to groupings of native plants (idea - kiosk with inventory of native plants available and a laminated copy of regional native plant guide.)

Plant Tags

Featuring campaign logo, and website, to identify native plants at retailers. Also worked with garden centers to set aside a separate sections for natives or to group natives, such as organizing potted natives in sample landscaping schemes.

Please Carry Cards

If a native plant is not available, customer leaves card with the retailer.

TOOL: Commitments/Social Norms



If we observe others acting sustainably, we are more likely to act similarly.

- Make the norm visible.
- Use personal contact to reinforce norms.
- Facilitate the adoption of new behavior through social diffusion:

1. Make commitments public and durable
 - a. Make the actions visible in the community – an effective way to increase the visibility of invisible behaviors is to ask for public commitments.
 - b. Whenever possible, these public commitments should be durable.
2. Recruit well known and well respected people, who can have an inordinate impact upon the adoption of new behaviors.

Example Campaign Strategy Components

Signed Pledge Banners

Pledge signatures gathered publicly at exhibits and other events. Those signing receive a pledge decal.

Pledge Decal

Distributed to those who pledge to visibly display and show their commitment to plant native.

Community Leader Program

Trained and help implement all facets of the campaign strategy.

PLANT VIRGINIA NATIVES STATEWIDE PARTNERSHIP

The second facet of the Plant Virginia Natives Initiative is state-wide collaboration on native plant marketing. In August 2011, with regional native plant marketing campaigns expanding, the Virginia CZM Program established a partnership with state and regional agencies and organizations to:

Identify and prioritize opportunities to collaborate on Virginia native plant communication and marketing efforts and form cohesive and coordinated messaging and strategies to increase local availability and use of native plants state-wide.

A core team of member organizations (below) identified projects that would be more efficiently and effectively addressed through the partnership: a) support for a Virginia conservation landscaping certification; b) strategies to help increase the availability of native plants including a framework and guidelines for native plant seed collection/propagation; and, c) coordination of state-wide native plant marketing strategies.

The partnership drafted an **Action Plan** based on these priorities, core team discussions and feedback from open partner forums. The Action Plan focuses on strategies and actions to address four goals:

- 1. Increase collaboration and coordination among partners engaged in native plant education, communication and marketing;*
- 2. Increase Virginia Grown native plant stock;*
- 3. Increase the availability of native plants at local plant retailers*
- 4. Increase demand and use of Virginia native plants by landscape and land use professions, homeowners, landscaping and demonstration restoration projects on public and private lands.*

Download the Action Plan at
www.PlantVirginiaNatives.org

A status report highlighting the work of partners to address the actions in the plan is available upon request.

Plant Virginia Natives Core Partnership Team

Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program (Chair)
Virginia Dept of Wildlife Resources (formerly Game and Inland Fisheries)
Albemarle County
Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
Blue Ridge PRISM
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council
Flora of Virginia
Friends of the Rappahannock
Garden Club of Virginia
Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden
Norfolk Botanical Gardens
Piedmont Environmental Council
Planning District Commission and Regional Commissions statewide
Virginia Dept of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs
Virginia Dept of Conservation and Recreation, Natural Heritage Division

Virginia Dept of Environmental Quality
Virginia Dept of Forestry
Virginia Department of Transportation
Virginia County Extension Offices
Virginia Institute of Marine Science
Virginia Master Gardener Program
Virginia Master Naturalist Program
Virginia Native Plant Society
Virginia Society of Landscape Designers
VA Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Wetlands Watch
Wild Ones Richmond
Williamsburg Botanical Gardens
Virginia Native Plant Provider Reps

For more information, contact: Virginia Witmer, Virginia CZM Program,
(804) 659-1912; Virginia.Witmer@deq.virginia.gov

WWW.PLANTVIRGINIANATIVES.ORG