DROUGHT TOLERANT NATIVE PLANTS FOR VIRGINIA

Prolonged periods of drought do have an impact on native plants, but they tend to be better adapted to this climate and can tolerate its extremes. Planted in appropriate habitats, many natives will thrive in our gardens without much supplemental watering. However, even the most drought tolerant plants need to get their roots established before they can stand on their own. For best results, plant in the fall when the temperatures have dropped and the ground has more moisture in it. That way your plants will be well established before hot and dry conditions return.

CHOOSE PLANTS WISELY – People tend to choose plants that they like, rather than what’s suited to their yard – and then try to make up for poor habitat with extra water and fertilizer. Drought only makes it tougher on such misplaced plants, and when it gets so severe that water use is restricted, there may be nothing you can do to save them. Select plants to suit the conditions in your yard! Choose plants appropriate for the local climate, and then plant them in the proper habitat, whether it’s wet, dry, sun or shade. If you have a wet spot in your yard, then you can grow plants that like it moist there. (An often overlooked area is that spot where condensation from your air conditioner drips all summer long – it’s the perfect spot for plants that like it moist in the summer.)

ONE OTHER CONSIDERATION – Often what enables a plant to withstand such conditions is the part that we can’t see – the root system. Many of the toughest plants cope with the climate by having deep or wide spreading root systems capable of drawing on remote water sources, or thick fleshy roots, which can store water for use during, dry periods. This fact warrants careful consideration when you’re deciding where to plant, since such plants tend to be extremely difficult to move once they get their roots established.

PERENNIALS:
prickly pear cactus (Opuntia species)
stonecrop (Sedum ternatum & others)
columbine (Aquilegia canadensis)
bloodroot (Sanguinaria canadensis)
mayapple (Podophyllum peltatum)
atamasco lily (Zephyranthes atamasco)
dwarf crested iris (Iris cristata)
butterfly weed (Asclepias tuberosa)
wild indigo (Baptisia species)
blue star (Amsonia tabernaemontana)
ironweed (Vernonia species)
rattlesnake master (Eryngium yuccifolium)
black-eyed susan (Rudbeckia fulgida)
green coneflower (Rudbeckia laciniata)
blanket flower (Gaillardia species)
bird’s foot violet (Viola pedata)
goldenrod (Solidago species)
asters (Aster species)
blazing Star (Liatris graminifolia)
golden aster (Pityopsis/Chrysopsis species)
thoroughwort (Eupatorium species)
coreopsis (Coreopsis species)
beardtongue (Penstemon species)

VINES:
coral honeysuckle (Lonicera sempervirens)
yellow jessamine (Gelsemium sempervirens)
trumpet creeper (Campsis radicans)
passion vine (Passiflora incarnata)

SHRUBS:
wax myrtle or bayberry (Myrica cerifera)
sumac (Rhus species)
blueberries (Vaccinium species)
native viburnums (Viburnum species)
beautyberry (Callicarpa Americana)
grey dogwood (Cornus racemosa)
new jersey tea (Ceanothus americanus)

TREES:
hickories (Carya species)
oaks (Quercus species)
redbud (Cercis Canadensis)
red cedar (Juniperus virginiana)
pines (Pinus species)
hackberry (Celtis occidentalis)
winged elm (Ulmus alata)

FERNS:
Christmas fern (Polystichum acrostichoides)

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