

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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## ➤ What is a “Native Plant Swap for Backyard Habitat”?

It's an opportunity for gardeners to divide their perennials and pot up native seedling shrubs, trees, grasses, vines, and groundcovers that they can share with other current as well as would-be sustainable landscape gardeners.

## ➤ Why do we need to create backyard habitats?

It is critical that we create functioning ecosystems in our yards to begin to address the dire threats to our environment caused by loss of habitat and degradation to habitat (due to alien plants, invasives, lawn-scaping, herbicides, pesticides, etc.). To learn more, we highly recommend Douglas Tallamy's excellent book, *Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants* (2007).

## ➤ Why the emphasis on native plants?

- Native trees and shrubs are adapted to our climate and growing conditions.
- Native plants support local food webs. They provide food—nuts, seeds, berries, fruits, leaves, and nectar—that best meet the needs of butterflies and other pollinators, as well as hummingbirds and other birds.
- Native plants host native insects with which they have co-evolved for millions of years. Native insects are critical to a functioning ecosystem. Most alien plants are toxic to native insects.
- Nesting birds feed their young a diet that is almost exclusively protein-rich insects—insects that are also adapted to native trees and shrubs (insects that won't be found in Forsythia, Bradford Pear, Azaleas, and a host of other aliens).
- Food and insect-bearing trees are especially critical to New Jersey's many migratory birds, who must be able to find massed and adequate supplies of food, if they are to survive their journeys.

## ➤ How can I know what plants are *native*?

If you are confused trying to tell natives from non-natives, you are not alone! Alien plants are so abundant many think of them as having always been here. You might want to begin by looking at the following list of common aliens that might look like natives and are not acceptable for swapping. *These include* **Butterfly Bush**, Asian Azaleas, Bugleweed (*Ajuga*), **Burning Bush**, Daylily, Hosta, Lily-of-the-Valley, Liriope, **Mimosa**, **Norway Maple**, **Oriental Bittersweet**, Pachysandra, **Rose-of-Sharon**, **Periwinkle (Vinca Vine)**, **Wisteria**, and Yarrow; those listed in **bold print** are also *invasive*, and you may want to remove them from your property.

Next, check out the list of acceptable native plants for swapping that appears on the reverse side of our flyer announcing this year's Native Plant Swap. Note that all lists are incomplete; there are many, many acceptable natives—and many non-acceptable aliens, too—so please attempt to ID your plants prior to dividing or potting them up.

- If you can put a name to a plant, you might want to go to [www.uucsjs.org](http://www.uucsjs.org) or [www.njaudubon.org](http://www.njaudubon.org), among other helpful websites, to make sure it's a native plant. (Another good source: <http://plants.usda.gov/java/>)
- If you are unsure of an ID, you might want to check in a field guide for plant identification. (Many field guides can be found at the library.)
- You can bring the plant(s) in question to your local County Extension office for an ID prior to potting up.
- You can bring a sample of the plant(s) in question to the UUCSJS Native Plant Swap for an ID.

## ➤ How can I know what plants are *invasive*?

For information on invasive species, go to: [www.npsnj.org/invasive\\_species\\_0103.htm](http://www.npsnj.org/invasive_species_0103.htm) or [www.maipc.org](http://www.maipc.org)

## ➤ How can I know which non-natives are “especially beneficial to wildlife”?

Our plant swap will also include a few non-native, non-invasive plants that are especially beneficial to birds and butterflies. Acceptable plants in this category are: Brazilian Verbena, Canna, Catmints, Globe Amaranth, Lavender, Mexican Sunflower, Penta, and Sedum. 🌸

The 8th Annual U.U.C.S.J.S.

**Native Plant SWAP • Saturday, May 7, 2016 • 9AM~2PM**  
**at the UU Center, 75 S. Pomona Rd., Galloway (corner of Pomona & Liebig)**

For more information, including lists and links to backyard habitat plants and butterfly & hummingbird plants, go to: [www.uucsjs.org](http://www.uucsjs.org)