

Self-Guided Tour
THE NATIVE PLANT CENTER'S
LADY BIRD JOHNSON DEMONSTRATION GARDEN

Welcome to the Lady Bird Johnson Demonstration Garden. The garden was established in 1998 to honor the First Lady, whose commitment to the preservation of native plants increased public awareness about their environmental necessity, economic value, and natural beauty. The native species in this garden can be found regionally in natural habitats and can be considered for use in your own gardens. Plant labels throughout the garden will help you identifying species; for aesthetic reasons not every plant is labeled.

As orientation to the gardens, start your tour at the information panel in the center of the garden. Behind the panel is a large cranberry viburnum (*Viburnum trilobum*) that bears a profusion of red berries valued by birds as a food source in winter. The shrub was damaged during Hurricane Sandy. New plantings fill out the area of meadow left bare.

The bed to your right contains lovely purple-flowered ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*), wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*), and fragrant sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*) that flower in late summer—all favorites of butterflies. Bayberry (*Morella pensylvanica*) shrubs are at the rear of this bed; bayberry is a fast-growing, semi-evergreen shrub that produces small, powder-blue berries in fall. Easy to grow, it offers prime food and shelter for wildlife. New to the bed, at its center, is a multi-trunked American smoke tree (*Cotinus obovatus*). Native to the southeast, this small tree gets its name from the smoky appearance of the 6- to 10-inch flower panicles with their red to purple petioles. This bed is being changed over to a garden of plants of shorter height rather than meadow-type species.

The entrance to The Native Plant Center's gatehouse office is flanked by a mix of woody and herbaceous species, including cranberry viburnum (*Viburnum trilobum*), St. Andrew's cross (*Hypericum hypericoides*), fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatica*), and inkberry (*Ilex glabra*).

At the rear of the building are significant plantings of Virginia sweetspire (*Itea virginica*) and mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*). As you turn around you'll see an island of three flowering dogwoods (*Cornus florida*), whose white bracts brighten the spring landscape followed by red berries relished by birds and then a wonderful maroon leaf color in fall.

At the far northern end of the garden, along the campus border, is an area that was cleared in 2012 of masses of multiflora rose, oriental bittersweet, and other invasive species. The site was planted with native trees and shrubs particularly beneficial to birds. Care was taken in choosing the mix to showcase different species of the same genus so that professionals and non-professionals alike can compare the plants. For example, featured are different species of native viburnums (*Viburnum acerifolium*, *V. dentatum*, *V. lentago*, *V. nudum*, *V. prunifolium*); amelanchier (*Amelanchier alnifolia*, *A. canadensis*, *A. laevis*, *A. stolonifera*); and azaleas (*Rhododendron calendulaceum*, *R. periclymenoides*, *R. prinophyllum*, *R. viscosum*) Some of the selections are edible for people, too, such as pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*), American hazelnut (*Corylus americana*), and both highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*) and lowbush blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*).

As you make your way back to the center of the garden, see the wildflower meadow along the western boundary. The meadows were seeded in 1998, and, unsure whether all the perennial flowers and grasses that were sowed would appear, in April 1999 the meadows were also planted with “plugs”—one-year-old, bare-root stock. It’s more expensive than seed, but the results are more immediate. The plants are left to seed and overwinter to provide food for wildlife. The meadows are mowed once a year, in early spring, to about six inches.

Among the flowers you may see blooming in summer are black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), Joe-pye weed (*Eupatorium purpureum*), purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), culver’s root (*Veronicastrum virginicum*), swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*), wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*), and prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*), a short grass good for edging;. Fall heralds the arrival of asters and Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) inflorescences. July through September you will see large colonies of common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) that were not planted but naturalized on their own and attract monarch butterflies, which lay their eggs on these host plants.

The meadow is under restoration. In recent years it had become overrun with Canada goldenrod (an aggressive native species) and non-native species such as porcelainberry and multiflora rose. The restoration process offers an opportunity for learning and the testing of best practices. With the guidance of meadow specialist Larry Weaner, a plan was created in fall 2014. The signs posted around the meadow explain the methods we are using to re-create a diverse native meadow.

The bed under the northern red oak tree (*Quercus rubra*), near the bench, holds an interesting mix of plants. The dwarf fothergilla (*Fothergilla gardenii*) shrubs display fabulous leaf color in fall. Native to the southeastern United States, the species grows well in this area and thrives in sun or light shade. White plumes of black cohosh (*Actaea racemosa* var. *racemosa*), bloom in June (this plant is a larval host for the spring azure butterfly), followed in July by white wild quinine (*Parthenium integrifolium*). Both make excellent cut flowers.

Moving to the south end of the garden, you will see two silverbell trees (*Halesia carolina*). Their white bell-like flowers bloom in spring, giving way to interesting seed pods in summer and fall. Nearby is a red-leaf redbud (*Cercis canadensis* ‘Forest Pansy’). Also in this area is pinkshell azalea (*Rhododendron prinophyllum* ‘Marie Hoffman’), which in spring explodes with brilliant pink flowers that emit a heady, spicy-sweet aroma. This lovely shrub prefers partial shade and moist acidic soil. The stiff goldenrod (*Solidago rigida*) attracts butterflies when blooming in early autumn, and its seeds are enjoyed by birds. The native sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) trees growing in the parking lot divider and the plantings around the electronic sign at the intersection are all part of this demonstration garden.

Visit throughout the year to witness seasonal changes and the ongoing development of this native landscape. If you have questions or suggestions, or if you would like to volunteer, please call 914-606-7870.

To visit The Native Plant Center’s other demonstration gardens, behind the Stone Cottage:

- Walk to the entrance of Parking Lot 1
- Cross the road, toward the Administration Building
- To its right is the Stone Cottage, the Center’s headquarters

THANK YOU FOR VISITING.