

CREATING MODEL GARDENS & LANDSCAPING

CHECKLIST FOR DEMONSTRATION SITES

This checklist is for anyone wishing to create or renew a native plant demonstration garden, or transform an existing garden into a demonstration site. It identifies phases, vital steps and other considerations that will contribute to the success of your effort.



Rachel Veal

A native plant demonstration site at the North Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Garden Goals

- ___1. Establish primary function or theme (wildlife habitat, outdoor living, etc.).
- ___2. Determine style (naturalistic, traditional, etc.).
- ___3. Assess resources for maintenance needs (financial and labor) to establish the scale of your project.

Site Selection and Evaluation

- ___1. Choose a location accessible to visitors and maintenance crews.
- ___2. Mark utility connections and water lines.
- ___3. Decide if you need a landscaping contractor for installation and/or maintenance. If yes: Search for contractors experienced in native plant or natural landscaping projects. Discuss your needs with the contractor. Confirm if they are willing to work with this checklist.
- ___4. Assess site conditions: hydrology; sun, wind and salt exposure; and soil type.
- ___5. Ensure water is available. If an irrigation system is added, design for differences in plant needs.

Site Preparation

- ___1. Remove invasive species, weeds and other unwanted plants. Repeat, if needed, before installation.
- ___2. Analyze soil and amend as necessary. Contact your county NC State Extension office for soil sample kits.
- ___3. Determine if you need to incorporate organic material, especially if moisture retention is low or soil is compacted. Talk to your county extension agent for guidance.

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Creating the Design

- ___1. Create a design and planting plan suitable for site conditions using eastern North Carolina natives and guides available from the Coastal Landscapes Initiative and partners. Or secure services of a landscape designer with knowledge of native plants and sustainable design.
- ___2. Include at least 60% to 80% native plants in the design.
- ___3. Avoid using invasive plants.

Installation Preparation

- ___1. Schedule planting dates between October and early April for optimal success.
- ___2. Secure plants well in advance. Some may not be readily available or in the size you want. Start your plant search early (up to a year in advance, if possible) to ensure you have plants prior to the target planting date.
- ___3. Determine acceptable substitutes for species that can't be located.
- ___4. Contact garden centers, nurseries and growers to ask if they can provide your selections when needed. Some may be willing to grow plants on a contract basis for a reasonable cost.
- ___5. Ensure proper plant spacing that leaves room for plants to fill in, especially shrubs and trees.
- ___6. Follow minimal spacing requirements for perennials and groundcovers to shade the soil, provide wildlife shelter and minimize weeds.

MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT

- ___1. Develop a maintenance plan and schedule for your garden team members (volunteers or contractors) who have committed to regular maintenance chores.
- ___2. Continue weeding and invasive species removal throughout the growing season.
- ___3. During the first year, ensure all plants receive adequate moisture from rainfall or supplemental watering.
 - Most plants require 1 inch of water per week.
 - A thorough soaking is more effective than frequent sprinkling.
- ___4. Inspect plants on a regular basis for diseases and pests. Replace lost plants, preferably in cool weather.
- ___5. Use durable plant labels for identification and inspect regularly to ensure they are properly located.
- ___6. Use sufficient mulch (about 2 inches) to improve moisture retention.
- ___7. To encourage reseeding of perennials, remove or thin out mulch around these plants in the autumn when seeds are ripe.
- ___8. Use nonintensive maintenance techniques to increase wildlife habitat value:
 - Tolerate some level of insect damage and don't use pesticides.
 - Leave dead stems standing until spring as shelter for pollinator species.

RESOURCES

Plant guides, design templates and other resources on native plants: go.ncsu.edu/CoastalLandscapes
Guidance on designing and maintaining a native plant garden:

- projects.ncsu.edu/goingnative/howto/index.html
- content.ces.ncsu.edu/extension-gardener-handbook/12-native-plants/
- go.ncsu.edu/ModelLandscapes

For soil test kits and gardening advice, contact your NC State Extension County Centers:

ces.ncsu.edu/local-county-center/

Specific plant information: plants.ces.ncsu.edu/

SHARING AND EDUCATION

- ___1. Share information and photos, including with Coastal Landscapes Initiative partners.
- ___2. Encourage visitors to explore your garden.
- ___3. Provide educational information in your garden about sustainable landscaping, especially with interpretative signage or handouts.
- ___4. Schedule periodic tours and events, including hands-on activities.
- ___5. Track visitation and impact of your efforts.
- ___6. Consider obtaining certification or recognition for your site, including from one of the following programs:
 - National Wildlife Federation
nwf.org/garden-for-wildlife/certify
 - NC Native Plant Society
ncwildflower.org/about/certified/



Emilee Morrison

A native plant demonstration site at the NC State Extension office in Onslow County.



This checklist is a product of the Coastal Landscapes Initiative, or CLI, a collaborative effort to address landscaping at every stage of the process, from planning and design to installation and management. Partners come from the public and private sectors and draw on a range of North Carolina coastal landscaping expertise to foster attractive, desirable, functional, manageable and environmentally friendly coastal landscapes.



UNC-NCSG-20-01

