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.

**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.

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/

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/

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.