

Using native trees and shrubs in the home landscape



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**Cooperative Extension
Education Resource**

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One of the greatest things about gardening in Georgia is the sheer number of native plants that are found here. Georgia is one of the most botanically diverse states in the country with nearly 3,000 species of trees, shrubs, grasses, flowers, and groundcovers. The potential for the use of native plants in the landscape is almost endless.

Georgia has a diverse ecosystem, which accounts for the large variety of native plants found here. There are mountains in the north, coastal plains in the south, the piedmont in the central part of the state, and the Georgia coast. Gwinnett County is in the piedmont, a region with highly weathered soil. It offers some of the best soil in the state in which to grow plants.

A native plant community, if incorporated into the landscape and given minimal care, will be low maintenance and self-sufficient over time. In many communities across our region there is a growing interest in preserving these native plant areas, often referred to as 'green spaces.'

Using native plants in your landscape is ecologically sound and environmentally friendly. There are several types of native plants. Trees and shrubs combine to create wonderful seasonal interest. The many native ferns, herbaceous flowering plants, and grasses can be used in a variety of ways. They are drought, heat, insect, and disease resistant, and are easy to maintain when planted properly. The use of native plants is an important component of various environmentally friendly landscape management systems, such as xeriscaping and integrated pest management. A native plant usually requires less maintenance, but still needs some. It needs to grow in an environment to which it is adapted. If the plant material, such as most ferns, is adapted to shaded forests with moist organic matter, then the plant will not perform well planted in a hot, sunny, dry location. In choosing the appropriate plant material for the area, consider your own particular site and location. You may have several different plant environments in your yard. Keep the plan as simple as possible.

Choosing native plants reduces the likelihood that invasive plants such as Chinese privet and honeysuckle will be introduced to the local environment. Do not transplant natives from woodlands unless you own the land. Go to one of Gwinnett County's many local nurseries that offer them for sale.



*Piedmont azalea is an example
of a native plant.
(Picture by Timothy Daly)*