

# NATIVE PLANTS for RIPARIAN CORRIDORS in CONNECTICUT

## What is a “Riparian Corridor?”

“Riparian” refers to the land area along the banks of a river, stream, or other body of water.

“Corridor” refers to a designated zone or strip of land of a specified width along the border of an area. So a “riparian corridor” is the natural vegetation and soil cover adjacent to a river, stream or other body of water.

Riparian corridors provide multiple functions and values. They are the first line of defense against the impacts of impervious surfaces by slowing and filtering runoff. Vegetated riparian corridors also protect shorelines from erosion, aid in flood control, provide habitat for wildlife and moderate water temperatures for fish and other aquatic life. Additionally, riparian corridors may provide scenic value and privacy.

The following is a list of plants native to Connecticut that can grow and thrive in these riparian corridors – areas in which soils are often wet or moist or which may be inundated at certain times after heavy rain events or due to snow melt. This is not an exhaustive list, but rather a sampling of some of the more common native plants that can grow under these conditions. There are numerous other native plants that will do well in upland buffer areas with drier soils that rarely, if ever, are inundated. These plants are not addressed here. Instead this list focuses on plants that can withstand periodic inundation or consistently wet to moist soils.

Please contact Juliana Barrett (<mailto:juliana.barrett@uconn.edu>) for questions or comments. Please also let us know if this list is useful and how you’ve used it to plant a riparian corridor. Additions to this list are always welcomed. (February 2023)

CTSG–23-04



## TREES

Latin name	Common Name	Growth Preferences	Wildlife/Pollinator Value
<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Red maple	Wet to dry soils; sun to part shade; tolerates intermittent flooding and wet soils	Bees feed on early season flower nectar and pollen; wildlife utilize for food and habitat.
<i>Acer saccharinum</i>	Silver maple	Rich, wet to moist soils; sun to shade; tolerates seasonal flooding	Bees feed on early season flower nectar; wildlife utilize for food and habitat; larval host for cecropia silk moth
<i>Betula lenta</i>	Sweet or black birch	Rich, moist well-drained soils; sun to shade	Seeds eaten by birds; larval host for several butterfly and moth species
<i>Betula nigra</i>	River birch	Moist soils; good for periodically wet areas; sun to part shade	Seeds eaten by birds and small mammals; larval host for mourning cloak and dreamy duskywing butterflies.
<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	Sweetgum	Deep, moist soils: sun to part shade	Seeds eaten by some birds and small mammals; larval host for many moth species
<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	Tulip tree, tulip poplar	Rich, moist soils; sun to part shade	Supports pollinators and is larval host plant for many butterflies and moths; seeds eaten by some birds and small mammals; favored nesting habitat for some birds
<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>	Black gum	Wide range of soils, best on moist well-drained deep soils; sun to part shade; will tolerate poorly drained soils	Nectar source for bees; berries eaten by songbirds and mammals; older tree trunks provide wildlife habitat
<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>	American sycamore	Best on moist, well-drained soils; sun to part shade; tolerates seasonal flooding	Seeds eaten by songbirds and small mammals; larval host for numerous moths
<i>Populus deltoides</i>	Eastern cottonwood	Moist, well-drained soils; sun to part shade; can tolerate seasonally flooded soils	Browse, habitat and nesting material for small mammals; larval host for numerous butterflies including mourning cloak and viceroy

### TREES (continued)

Latin Name	Common Name	Growth Preferences	Wildlife/Pollinator Value
<i>Quercus bicolor</i>	Swamp white oak	Poorly drained to moist soils; prefers full sun; can tolerate occasional flooding <b>Raw acorns and leaves can be toxic to humans</b>	Acorns are eaten by mammals and some birds; larval host for numerous butterflies and moths
<i>Quercus palustris</i>	Pin oak	Wet to moist soils; sun to part shade; tolerates poorly drained soils <b>Raw acorns and leaves can be toxic to humans</b>	Acorns are eaten by mammals and some birds; larval host for numerous butterflies and moths
<i>Salix nigra</i>	Black willow	Wet to moist soils; sun to part shade; flood tolerant	Birds and mammals eat seeds/other plant parts; larval host for several butterflies; pollen value for native bees

### SMALL TREES and SHRUBS

Latin name	Common name	Growth Preferences	Wildlife/Pollinator Values
<i>Alnus serrulata</i>	Smooth alder	Wet to moist soils; sun, part shade, shade	Supports an aphid which provides larval food (honeydew) for harvester butterfly; food and habitat for some birds
<i>Amelanchier arborea</i>	Common serviceberry, Shadbush	Moist, well-drained soils; sun to part shade	Pollen source for native bees and other pollinators; larval host for red-spotted purple butterfly; berries eaten by songbirds and mammals
<i>Amelanchier canadensis</i>	Canada serviceberry	Moist, well-drained soils; sun to part shade	Pollen source for native bees and other pollinators; larval host for red-spotted purple butterfly; berries eaten by songbirds and mammals

### SMALL TREES and SHRUBS (continued)

Latin name	Common name	Notes	Wildlife Value
<i>Amelanchier laevis</i>	Smooth serviceberry	Moist to dry soils; sun to part shade	Pollen source for native bees; Nectar source for butterflies and other insects; larval host for red-spotted purple butterfly; berries eaten by songbirds and mammals
<i>Aronia arbutifolia</i>	Red chokeberry	Moist, well-drained soils; but will tolerate wet, boggy soils; Full to partial sun	Flowers attract butterflies and other pollinators; berries are food source for migrating and overwintering birds, and small mammals
<i>Aronia melanocarpa</i>	Black chokeberry	Moist soils; sun to part shade; flood tolerant	Flowers attract butterflies and other pollinators; birds eat fruits.
<i>Benthamidia florida</i> ( <i>Cornus florida</i> )	Flowering dogwood	Moist to dry, well-drained soils; sun to part shade	Nectar source for specialized bees and butterflies; fruits are food source for songbirds and small mammals; larval host for spring azure butterfly
<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	Common buttonbush	Wet to moist soils; sun to part shade	Nectar source for bees, hummingbirds, butterflies and other insects; waterfowl and songbirds eat seeds
<i>Clethra alnifolia</i>	Coastal sweet pepperbush	Wet to moist soils; sun to part shade (full shade is tolerated)	Nectar source for hummingbirds, butterflies, bees and other pollinators
<i>Eubotrys racemosa</i> ( <i>Leucothoe racemosa</i> )	Swamp doghobble	Wet to moist soils; partial to full shade <b>Plant parts poisonous to cattle and some other domestic animals</b>	Nectar/pollen source for butterflies, bees and other pollinators.
<i>Hamamelis virginiana</i>	American witch hazel	Moist to dry soils, grows best on moister soils; sun to shade	Blooms in fall: nectar source for butterflies and moths; fruits/seeds are eaten by birds; seeds eaten by small mammals
<i>Ilex verticillata</i>	Common winterberry	Wet to moist well-drained soils; sun to part shade; will tolerate poorly-drained soils; need male and female plants to produce fruits; <b>Plant parts are somewhat toxic to humans</b>	Larval host for Henry's elfin butterfly; nectar/food source for butterflies, specialized bees, songbirds and small mammals

### SMALL TREES and SHRUBS (continued)

Latin name	Common name	Notes	Wildlife Value
<i>Lindera benzoin</i>	Northern spicebush	Prefers moist, well-drained soils but grows in wet to dry soils; sun to part shade	Larval host for several swallowtail species and the promethea silkmoth; food source for butterflies and other pollinators; songbirds eat fruits and use plant as habitat
<i>Rhododendron maximum</i>	Great laurel	Wet to moist, well-drained soils; Partial shade to shade; <b>Plants are highly toxic to humans and domestic animals</b>	Food source for butterflies, bees, hummingbirds and other pollinators
<i>Rhododendron viscosum</i>	Clammy or Swamp azalea	Wet soil; part shade; flood tolerant <b>Plants are highly toxic to humans and domestic animals</b>	Food source for bees, hummingbirds and butterflies
<i>Salix discolor</i>	Pussy willow	Medium to wet, well-drained soils; sun	Food source for many bees and butterflies; larval host for viceroy and mourning cloak
<i>Salix sericea</i>	Silky willow	Wet to moist soils; sun to shade	Larval host plant for Acadian hairstreak moth; pollen source for honey bees and native bees
<i>Sambucus nigra</i> ssp. <i>canadensis</i> (Native subspecies)	Black elderberry	Wet to moist soils; sun to part shade. <b>Parts of plant are toxic to humans</b>	Food source for butterflies; birds eat berries
<i>Spiraea alba</i>	White meadowsweet	Wet to moist soils; sun to shade	Food source for pollinators including butterflies and native bees; larval host plant for the Spring azure butterfly
<i>Swida alternifolia</i> ( <i>Cornus alternifolia</i> )	Alternate-leafed dogwood	Moist, well-drained soils; part shade to shade	Nectar source for butterflies; Fruits are food source for birds and mammals including black bear
<i>Swida amomum</i> ( <i>Cornus amomum</i> )	Silky dogwood	Wet to moist soils; sun to shade	Nectar source for specialized bees and butterflies; fruits are food source for birds and small mammals; larval host for spring and summer azure butterflies

### SMALL TREES and SHRUBS (continued)

Latin name	Common name	Notes	Wildlife Value
<i>Swida racemosa</i> ( <i>Cornus racemosa</i> )	Gray dogwood	Tolerant of dry to wet soils; sun to shade	Nectar/pollen source for bees and butterflies; fruits are food source for birds; larval host for spring/summer azure butterflies; when allowed to form thickets, provides habitat for birds and small mammals
<i>Swida sericea</i> ( <i>Cornus sericea</i> )	Red-osier dogwood	Moist, well-drained soils; sun to partial shade	Nectar/pollen source for bees and butterflies; fruits are food source for birds and mammals; larval host for spring azure butterfly
<i>Vaccinium corymbosum</i>	Highbush blueberry	Wet to dry soils; sun to part shade	Nectar source for pollinators; larval host plant for the brown elfin butterfly; fruits eaten by numerous birds and mammals
<i>Viburnum dentatum</i>	Smooth arrowwood	Wet to dry soils; sun to part shade	Nectar/pollen source for butterflies, native bees and bumble bees; berries are food source for birds and small mammals; may be larval host plant for spring azure butterfly
<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	Highbush cranberry	Wet to well-drained, moist soils; flood tolerant; sun to partial shade	Nectar/pollen source for butterflies, native bees and bumble bees; berries are food source for birds and small mammals; larval host plant for spring azure butterfly

### FERNS and FERN ALLIES

Latin name	Common name	Notes	Wildlife Value
<i>Equisetum fluviatile</i>	River horsetail	Wet to moist soils; sun to shade	No information available
<i>Equisetum hyemale</i>	Tall scouring-rush	Wet to moist soils; sun to part shade	Groundcover for wildlife
<i>Onoclea sensibilis</i>	Sensitive fern	Wet to moist soils; part shade to shade	Provides shelter for amphibians
<i>Osmundastrum cinnamomeum</i>	Cinnamon fern	Wet to moist soils; sun to shade – depending on moisture conditions	Groundcover for wildlife; nest material for birds
<i>Osmunda claytoniana</i>	Interrupted fern	Moist to dry soils; Shade	No information available
<i>Osmunda regalis</i>	Royal fern	Wet to moist soils; part shade to shade	Groundcover for wildlife
<i>Thelypteris palustris</i>	Marsh fern	Wet to moist soils; sun to part shade	Larval host plant for the marsh fern moth
<i>Woodwardia virginica</i>	Virginia chain fern	Wet to moist soils; part shade (can be aggressive)	No information available

### GRASSES, SEDGES, and REEDS

Latin Name	Common Name	Notes	Wildlife Value
<i>Calamagrostis canadensis</i>	Bluejoint	Wet to moist soils; sun to shade; tolerates seasonal flooding	Provides food and cover for deer and small mammals
<i>Carex crinita</i>	Fringed sedge	Wet to moist soils; sun to part shade	Provides food and cover for waterfowl
<i>Carex lacustris</i>	Lakeside sedge	Wet to moist soils including standing water; sun to shade	Larval host plant for the Appalachian brown, dion skipper and broad-winged skipper butterflies; seeds eaten by waterfowl and songbirds; rodents and small mammals use stems for food and habitat

## GRASSES, SEDGES, and REEDS (continued)

Latin Name	Common Name	Notes	Wildlife Value
<i>Carex lupulina</i>	Hop sedge	Wet to moist soils; part shade	Food source for waterfowl and some songbirds; larval host plant for eyed brown butterfly
<i>Carex lurida</i>	Sallow sedge	Wet to moist soils; sun to part shade; will tolerate temporary flooding	Provides habitat and cover for wildlife; larval host plant for several species of skipper butterflies
<i>Carex scoparia</i>	Pointed broom sedge	Wet to dry soils; sun to part shade	Food source and habitat cover for waterfowl and some songbirds
<i>Carex stipata</i>	Awl-fruited sedge	Wet to moist soils including standing water; sun	Food source for waterfowl
<i>Carex stricta</i>	Tussock sedge	Wet to moist soils; sun to part shade; will tolerate standing water	Food source for wetland birds; nesting habitat/cover for some marsh birds; larval host plant for eyed brown butterfly and several species of skipper butterflies and moths
<i>Carex vulpinoidea</i>	Common fox sedge	Wet to moist soils; sun to part shade	Provides habitat and cover for wildlife; larval host plant for several species of skipper butterflies
<i>Dulichium arundinaceum</i>	Three-way sedge	Wet to moist soils; sun to part shade	Seeds eaten by waterfowl and some birds
<i>Eleocharis palustris</i>	Common spikesedge	Wet to moist soils; part shade; areas with permanent or seasonal flooding	Provides food for waterfowl
<i>Elymus riparius</i>	Eastern riverbank wild-rye	Moist soils; part shade to shade	Plants provide cover for small animals and nesting material for birds; seeds eaten by small mammals and birds
<i>Elymus virginicus</i>	Common eastern wild-rye	Moist to wet soils; sun to part shade	Birds and small mammals eat the seeds and use vegetative material for nest material



### GRASSES, SEDGES, and REEDS (continued)

Latin Name	Common Name	Notes	Wildlife Value
<i>Glyceria canadensis</i>	Rattlesnake manna grass	Wet to moist soils; sun	Plants provide cover for small animals and nesting material for birds; seeds eaten by songbirds and small mammals
<i>Juncus canadensis</i>	Canada rush	Wet to moist; sun to part shade	No information available
<i>Juncus effuses</i>	Common soft rush	Wet to moist soils; sun	Seeds and culms used by waterfowl and muskrats for food/cover
<i>Leersia oryzoides</i>	Rice cut grass	Wet soil to standing water; sun to part shade	Larval host for least skipper butterfly; seeds are food source for waterfowl, small mammals and shorebirds; ducks eat rhizomes; dense stands provide habitat for fish, reptiles, and amphibians

### HERBACEOUS PLANTS

Latin name	Common name	Notes	Wildlife Value
<i>Arisaema triphyllum</i>	Jack in the pulpit	Wet to moist soils; sun to shade; <b>Toxic plant</b>	Berries provide food for birds and mammals. Flower pollinated by flies.
<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	Swamp milkweed	Wet to moist soils; sun to part shade <b>Plants are mildly toxic</b>	Important food source for monarch butterfly larva. Nectar source butterflies and hummingbirds.
<i>Caltha palustris</i>	Marsh marigold	Wet to moist soils; sun to shade <b>Leaves are toxic</b>	Nectar source for bees and hummingbirds. Note: Do not confuse with Lesser Celandine ( <i>Ficaria verna</i> ), considered invasive in several states.

### HERBACEOUS PLANTS (continued)

Latin name	Common name	Notes	Wildlife Value
<i>Chelone glabra</i>	White turtlehead	Wet to moist soils; sun to shade	Nectar/pollen source for pollinators including hummingbirds, butterflies, bees and others; larval host for Baltimore checkerspot and common buckeye butterflies
<i>Doellingeria umbellata</i> ( <i>Aster umbellatus</i> )	Tall white aster	Moist soils; sun to part shade	Nectar/pollen source for pollinators including bees and butterflies; larval host for pearl crescent and Harris' checkerspot butterflies
<i>Eutrochium fistulosum</i> ( <i>Eupatorium fistulosum</i> )	Hollow Joe-Pye Weed	Wet to moist soils; sun to part shade	Food source for pollinators including bees and butterflies; song birds eat seeds in the fall
<i>Eutrochium maculatum</i> ( <i>Eupatorium maculatum</i> )	Spotted Joe-Pye Weed	Wet to moist soils; sun to part shade	Food source for pollinators including hummingbirds, bees and butterflies
<i>Eupatorium perfoliatum</i>	Common boneset	Wet to moist soils; sun to part shade <b>Toxic plant parts</b>	Food source for pollinators including butterflies, bees and hummingbirds
<i>Helenium autumnale</i>	Fall sneezeweed	Moist soils; sun to part shade <b>Toxic plant parts</b>	Food source for pollinators including native bees, honeybees, wasps, flies, butterflies, moths and beetles
<i>Hibiscus moscheutos</i>	Swamp rose-mallow	Wet (brackish and freshwater marshes) to moist soils; sun to part shade	Food source for pollinators including bees, butterflies and hummingbirds; seeds eaten by birds including wood ducks; larval host plant for gray hairstreak, skippers and painted lady butterflies
<i>Iris prismatica</i>	Slender blue iris	Wet soils (brackish to fresh coastal wetlands); part shade; <b>Toxic plant parts</b>	Food source for pollinators including hummingbirds and bees
<i>Iris versicolor</i>	Blue iris	Wet to moist soils; sun to part shade; <b>Toxic plant parts</b>	Food source for hummingbirds

### HERBACEOUS PLANTS (continued)

Latin name	Common name	Notes	Wildlife Value
<i>Lilium superbum</i>	Turk's-cap lily	Moist, well-drained soil; sun	Pollinated by the eastern tiger swallowtail butterfly and other butterflies as well as hummingbirds, bees and other insects.
<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>	Cardinal flower	Wet to moist soils; sun, part shade, shade; <b>Toxic plant parts</b>	Food source for hummingbirds, bees and swallowtail butterflies
<i>Lobelia siphilitica</i>	Blue lobelia	Wet to moist soils; sun, part shade, shade; <b>Toxic plants parts</b>	Food source for native bees, butterflies and hummingbirds
<i>Mimulus ringens</i>	Allegheny monkey flower	Wet to moist soils; sun, part shade	Attracts bumblebees, butterflies and hummingbirds; larval food source for Baltimore checkerspot and common buckeye
<i>Peltandra virginica</i>	Green arrow arum	Wet soils; sun to part shade	Fruits/seeds eaten by waterfowl such as wood ducks and migratory birds
<i>Pontederia cordata</i>	Pickerel weed	Wet soils; sun to part shade	Food source for bees and butterflies; seeds eaten by ducks
<i>Rudbeckia laciniata</i>	Green-headed coneflower	Moist soils; sun to part shade	Flowers attract bees and butterflies; seeds eaten by birds in the fall
<i>Sagittaria latifolia</i>	Common arrowhead	Wet soils; sun to part shade	Tubers are eaten by ducks, muskrat and snapping turtles
<i>Symphyotrichum novae-angliae</i> ( <i>Aster novae-angliae</i> )	New England American aster	Moist soils; part shade	Food source for butterflies, bumblebees, honey bees; seeds eaten by birds and small mammals; larval host for pearl crescent butterfly
<i>Symphyotrichum novi-belgii</i> ( <i>Aster novi-belgii</i> )	New York American aster	Moist well-drained soils; sun to part shade	Flowers attract butterflies, bees; seeds eaten by birds and small mammals; larval host plant for pearl crescent butterfly

**HERBACEOUS PLANTS (continued)**

<b>Latin name</b>	<b>Common name</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Wildlife Value</b>
<i>Verbena hastata</i>	Blue vervain	Wet to moist soils; sun to part shade	Flowers attract butterflies, bees and other insects; seeds eaten by birds and mammals; larval host plant for common buckeye butterfly
<i>Vernonia noveboracensis</i>	New York ironweed	Moist to dry soils; sun to part shade	Flowers attract butterflies, bees and birds; seeds are food source for songbirds
<i>Viola cucullata</i>	Blue marsh violet	Wet to moist soils; sun, part shade, shade	Flowers attract butterflies, bees; larval food source for fritillary butterflies
<i>Viola lanceolata</i>	Lance-leaved violet	Wet to moist soils; part shade to shade	Flowers attract butterflies and bees; larval food source for fritillary butterflies

Toxicity – General information is provided on toxicity of plants to humans. This can refer to ingestion or may be contact with skin. Amounts that are toxic are variable and depend on the plant. Parts of plant that are toxic also depends on the plant species. Please use this information as a general guideline only. Several of the references below provide more specific information.

Taxonomy – Plant names and native status are referenced using the Native Plant Trust

References:

<https://gobotany.nativeplanttrust.org/>

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