



Serving the Township of Verona since 1992

SPRING 2024 NEWSLETTER

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Summer Herb Gardens

Adding fresh garden herbs to favorite food and drinks is one of the greatest joys of summer. But you need to plant your herbs with care to make those moments happen.

Some herbs are delicate and die during the first extended frost. Basil, parsley, cilantro, dill, fennel, rosemary, sage, tarragon will thrive for months when planted directly into the ground in direct sun. These herbs won't spread or return the following year (although sometimes the cilantro, fennel, and dill seeds from the prior season will replant). Generally, these herbs stop growing when cold weather rolls in and must be reseeded or replaced the following season.

Oregano, thyme, and especially mint (all types of mint) are hearty perennials that spread through your ground garden. Oregano and thyme are easier to control but mint can spread quickly and crowd out other vegetation. We recommend containing these herbs in large pots that get full sun.

But if you lack garden space, all of these herbs may be grown in pots when given ample soil and room to grow. Whether you're making fresh basil pesto or muddling mint for your favorite summer drink, sort your pots and garden early to reap a full season of fragrant, outdoor living and fresh, delicious eating.

Avoiding invasive species



Hundreds of perennials can beautify your garden and create a rich ecosystem in your yard. But choose with care. Many garden centers sell plants that are not native to the area or lack the heartiness to produce the nutrition and benefits needed by local birds, bees, flora, and fauna. And looks can be deceptive; even pretty plants and flowers can be highly invasive.

Invasive species like Bamboo, Japanese Knot Weed, Japanese Stilt Grass, English Ivy and Wisteria spread quickly and can overtake beneficial plants and shade them from necessary sun or even change the composition of your soil. Verona passed an [invasive species ordinance](#) last year to limit these plantings and encourage removal of some species.

Many invasive species are stealthy and garden centers stock them due to their attractive flowers or because they meet short-term needs, like providing groundcover for a shady area or concealing an exterior meter or fence. Unfortunately, while the appealing qualities of invasive species are fleeting, they cause long-lasting difficulties.



Lamium (dead nettle) pictured left, is an invasive groundcover that thrives in both sun and shade and develops pink, purple, or yellow blooms. Unfortunately, lamium quickly spreads, and chokes out other beneficial plants, entailing an exhaustive removal process.

Japanese Honeysuckle (yellow/white blooms) or Chinese Wisteria, (pictured right) has showy, pendulous clusters of purple flowers. This species is known to overtake and smother trees while damaging wood, brick, and stone siding. It spreads by seed and vegetatively by producing stolens (i.e., clones) that sprout and root, spreading the vine to another climbing area or tree. This attractive invasive is sold at most garden centers.



Other widely available invasive species include English or Boston ivy, yellow flag iris, black fountain grass, Japanese pachysandra, clematis, butterfly bush, barberry, and Scotch broom.

There are so many that we recommend you check each species online before purchasing.

See the short list of invasive species [here](#).

Choosing Native Species

There are a great deal of resources available to determine which perennials, shrubs, and trees to plant in your yard. But before you choose, you'll have a few major considerations to make according to your planting area conditions:

- sun, partial shade, or shade
- soil moisture/drainage. Dry areas vs moist or even waterlogged areas
- soil quality. You may need to enrich your soil with organic additives
- Zone: Verona is in Zone 7A. (we were in a slightly colder zone until last year!) Perennials for zone 7A can survive winter temperatures down to approximately 0-5 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Size of the area to be planted.
- You may consider birds that you'd like to attract
- Deer! Deer in our area have less and less acreage to live on while populations continue to grow. As food competition becomes more challenging, deer have begun to eat plants that until recently, were not appetizing. Unfortunately, deer don't feed on many invasive species. *Verona has developed [a Recommended Planting List](#) with a column for deer resistance of native and exotic, non-invasive species of trees, shrubs and ground covers.

Resources for Plantings

Now you're ready to choose plants. We recommend JerseyYards.org a stellar resource with excellent ideas for plants that offers information on hundreds of trees, shrubs, perennial and groundcovers. Each plant listing breaks down the specific conditions required for each plant, along with deer resistance. Their site also has an interactive tool for planning your garden area.

There are always alternatives for "pretty" flowers that are not invasive.

Heartleaf Foamflower (pictured right) is a low-growing groundcover, thrives in shade, and is moderately deer resistant. It likes both dry and moist soil, but prefers moist.



Liatris, pictured below left, is a tall growing flower with soft, and feathery blooms providing an ideal landing pad for bees and butterflies. This sun-loving perennial is very adaptable and seems reasonably resistant to deer.



And two other favorites: **Monarda /Beebalm** (pictured center) and **Lobelia Cardinalis** (lower right). Both are stunning additions to any garden. Beebalm needs sun, but the lobelia can thrive in sun or shade. Both are deer resistant and are major-league pollinators!

VEC UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Earth Day Poster Contest Awards Ceremony**
April 8th at the **Verona Town Council Meeting** at 7 p.m. All Verona Public School 4th graders are invited to participate!
- **Earth Day Assemblies**
April 9th - 10th at **Brookdale and Forest Avenue Schools**. Assemblies will focus on best recycling practices and no idling.
- **Earth Day Celebration, Cleanup and Tree Giveaway**
Saturday April 20th 9: a.m.-11a.m at **Grove Park** (rain date April 21st)
We will be giving away 300 free tree seedlings!
- **National Trails Day Cleanup**
Peckman River and Trail; behind FN Brown Elementary School
Saturday, June 1st 9 a.m.-11a.m.

WEBINARS

You can view our webinars and other informative videos on the [VEC YouTube Page](#)

In January, the VEC and [Sustainable Verona's Green Team](#) partnered to present:
"[Backyard Composting in Verona](#)"

*Order your composting equipment [here](#) by Friday April 12; pickup by April 13.



Can I help?

YES! WE NEED VOLUNTEERS!

The VEC meets the 2nd Wednesday of each month, except for August via internet conferencing. We welcome members of the public to attend, hear about what we are working on and express their concerns and interests.

The VEC has partnered with the Girl, Boy, Daisy, and Cub Scouts, Sustainable Verona's Green Team, The Verona Park and Hilltop Conservancies, The Verona Junior Women's Club, Verona's Historic Society, the Township of Verona's Administration, Department of Public Works, The Verona Public Schools, and the Verona Police Department among others. We are always interested in working with other groups to better our community.

We hold multiple cleanup events throughout each year and welcome resident and organization support and partnerships. To find out more about our events, please follow us on [FB](#) and [Instagram](#), visit our [website](#) or contact us at VEC@VeronaNJ.org.

