Native Plant Species on NIH Campuses

The NIH uses native plants across its many campuses to establish and maintain areas that benefit the local environment. With campuses in various parts of the country, such as Maryland, North Carolina and Montana, the NIH must adapt its native plant policies based on the local ecosystem. Here are a few examples from two NIH campuses:

<u>Bethesda</u>

The NIH Design Requirements Manual (DRM) for the Bethesda campus encourages the use of native plants in new projects on campus, as well as requiring the removal of invasive exotic plants. Of the 162 different species of trees growing on the Bethesda campus, 101 of these species are native to the Mid-Atlantic region. The Bethesda campus has two native champion trees (the largest of their species in Montgomery County) growing on campus - an Allegheny chinkapin behind building 45 and a black willow by the Stoney Creek Pond.







forest is the north woods between the NIH Fire House and West Cedar Lane. This is a 10-acre forest that is almost exclusively native species. Tulip poplars are the most prevalent species, but the forest also includes species such as American holly, red oak, pignut hickory, sycamore, sugar maple, black cherry and American beech. Of the 700 trees planted by the Bethesda grounds contractor over the past 5 years, 570 (over 81%) were native species.

The planting plan for the Patient Parking Garage that is

currently under construction on the west side of Convent Drive will use 87% native tree species and 50% native shrub species. Along with commonly available native plants, this planting plan includes less frequently planted native species such as: black gum, fringetree, swamp white oak, arrowwood viburnum and northern bayberry. On the west façade of the garage, a vertical trellis will be installed for native vines. The mix of native vines being planted are: crossvine, woodbine, Virginia creeper and American wisteria.



Native grasses are being used more and more for plantings on the Bethesda campus because they are good performers in a variety of moisture, soil and sunlight conditions. Many of the recently installed or soon to be installed rain garden areas incorporate plantings of switchgrass, which is resilient to drought, as well as standing water. A few more examples of native grasses planned for future installation on campus are little bluestem and tufted hair grass. These grasses are very hardy, deer resistant and offer good textural contrast to leafy native shrubs and groundcovers.

Research Triangle Park

The Research Triangle Park (RTP) campus follows a master landscape plan designed to improve the aesthetics of the campus by enhancing wildlife, lowering the level of grass cutting, and placing more

emphasis on native plants, trees and grasses. Plantings proposed for restoring areas disturbed during construction projects are reviewed and approved for grounds maintenance. The plant list of species approved for campus planting consists mostly of native species. The few non-native plant species on this list are non-invasive in North Carolina. The RTP grounds maintenance contract also includes a sustainability goal to replace dead or deteriorating plants with low-maintenance, droughtresistant native plants.



One of the more recent projects, the net-zero energy warehouse (Building 110), features many native plant species. A few examples are wax myrtle, willow oak, yaupon holly and stella daylily. The net-zero energy warehouse also features a constructed wetlands area that contains native plants like quill sedge, broadleaf arrowhead, blue flag iris and soft rush.