

florascope

NEWS FROM THE FLORA OF VIRGINIA PROJECT

Pick a Native for Your Site—Using the Flora App!

Did you know you could use the Flora of Virginia Mobile App to pick plants that suit your yard, garden, or other site? It's a little trick you can do using the App's Graphic Key. Let's assume you want a red native dicot to brighten up a special spot in July—but not a composite. Let's make a list of plants that might work.

Run the App. Then tap GRAPHIC KEY, then SKIP. You're sent to the bare-bones screen of the Graphic Key, with no selections made, and unless your device's GPS is picking up on your location, you'll see 3,164 species "found," that is, all the species in the App (for now!).

Pick the major group that contains the type of plant you want, in this case DICOT, OTHER. (If you aren't up on the 11 major groups, brush up by backing out and, instead of SKIP, tap BEGIN, and you'll get some information about what's in each group. Learning these groups is a good goal.) Tap the icon for DICOT, OTHER, which drops the number found to 1,242.

Location. Now let's get site-specific. If you're at home and want this plant for your yard, tap the box beside USE CURRENT LOCATION. But if you're thinking of your vacation house across the state, TAP TO SELECT that county from a list. The number found drops again. For MECKLENBURG COUNTY, it drops to 943.

Habitat and plant characters. Next, think of where you want to put your plant. You need to find species that like the habitat you're offering. So make a choice for MOISTURE REGIME and LIGHT REGIME. Under FLOWERING PERIOD, tap JULY. Go down and tap the RED icon for flower color. In Mecklenburg, a moist spot in part shade, I'm down to 27 species, so I tap SHOW and look at the thumbnails. I home in on Fire Pink (*Silene virginica*), Cardinal Flower (*Labelia cardinalis*), and Scarlet Beebalm (*Monarda didyma*), which strike my fancy.

You may want some shrubs, a few composites, maybe some orchids, different colored flowers. Repeat this process in different major groups. To make a list of species from different groups, for each species tap the thumbnail to open the description, then tap the star in the upper left. It turns gold, indicating that it's been added to your list of Favorites. Review your list by tapping FAVORITES on the BROWSE screen, off the HOME page.

You were probably tempted by the pretty Field Poppy (*Papaver dubium*) but learned it was a nonnative. We soon will add a button to the Graphic Key: DISPLAY NATIVES ONLY. This will help you weed out your list.

More nurseries are carrying more natives, and the Virginia Native Plant Society publishes a list of native-plant nurseries on its site: <http://vnps.org/conservation/plant-nurseries/>. This leaves only the legwork and the planting!



Among the choices returned by the Flora App: Cardinal Flower, Fire Pink, and Scarlet Beebalm.

Flora in the Spotlight

The Flora of Virginia's still making a splash.

In June, Midlothian's Salisbury Garden Club installed an exhibit at the Bon Air Library in Chesterfield County featuring the club's own materials and flower arrangements, as well as panels from the Flora of Virginia Project and the Library of Virginia's 2014 exhibition "Flora of Virginia." The exhibit was timed with National Garden Week, which the club recognizes in the community with "educational displays at libraries, gardening events, and bouquets for Meals on Wheels clients and assisted-living homes," says Meg Winn, chair of civic beautification. "For Bon Air Library, we used an educational panel about plants that deer don't eat—usually." The Chesterfield Library system holds three copies of the *Flora*, she said.

The club has given area children and adults an introduction to plants and the *Flora*, and this is its second such exhibit this spring.

The Flora Project garnered much attention at "Spring to Green," held Feb. 3 at the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research near Danville and sponsored by the Danville Master Gardener Association.

"Spring to Green is a full-day educational horticulture event held the first weekend of February each year, says Kim Eaton, vice president of the group. "Featured is the Learning Center, with 10 or so stations staffed with experts on topics like gardening with children, beekeeping, and herbs." The Flora Project was featured with a brochure placed in information packets for 250 participants, and we've been invited to have a space in the Learning Center next year. Eaton is from Yanceyville, N.C., and 6 of the group's 45 members hail from our neighboring state.

Botany and horticulture are having a meeting of the minds. Makes good sense!



The Salisbury Garden Club's *Flora*-focused exhibition at Bon Air Library (left, photo by Morgan Obenchain). Laura Powell, chair of Spring to Green this year and next, with the *Flora* she was given at this year's event. Powell is secretary of Danville Master Gardeners (photo by Kim Eaton).

About Our Mobile App

The App is a modern powerhouse for anyone who needs or wants to learn about Virginia plants, and more than 1,000 of you are already using it. We learned a lot from that survey and want to bring up a few points that may help as you use the App or encourage you to take the plunge!

IT WORKS INDOORS! The Mobile App works just fine indoors—in your living room, at the kitchen table, at your desk. In the survey, no one said it wouldn't, but there was a definite idea that people felt entering a building made using the App out of the question. It works great indoors!

NO CONNECTION NEEDED! The Mobile App does not require a connection to the Internet, neither wifi nor a data connection. Everything—from the descriptions to the photos to the range maps—is resident on your device. To download the App or an update, however, find a solid wifi connection. It's a lot of data, but it takes only a couple of minutes on a good connection. You wouldn't want to use a data link or a personal hotspot for this.

SIZE, SPEED, RESOLUTION The Mobile App is lightning-fast, the images astoundingly clear, and the resolution excellent. A smartphone may be small, but you hold it rather close when using it, so size is less of an issue. The text is small, but again, the way you use the phone, it should not be limiting for most people. Legibility is actually increased by the narrower columns of text on the devices. Also, you can enlarge the text on Android devices and in a limited way on iOS devices (see Settings). We'll make finer tuning possible soon in iOS.

TABLETS TOO! The Mobile App works on tablets as well as smartphones; a number of people were not aware of this. Plus, if you have an iPhone and an iPad, you can download it to both devices, same license. If you have an Android phone and an Android tablet, you can use it on both devices, same license. Plus, on a tablet it displays larger.

FROM AN EX-LUDDITE I got my first cell only in 2008, and it wasn't even so advanced as a flip phone. I got a smartphone in 2015, because I needed to know more about apps as we went about building ours. But I wasn't prepared for the universe it contained or that it would untether me from my computer for much of what I was using it for. Not meaning to preach, I do want to say that if you have a smartphone and are not taking advantage of its smarts, you're missing some amazing stuff, from music to the entire Web—and the Flora App! Just sayin', as they say.

—Bland Crowder, executive director, Flora of Virginia Project



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