



## Event Outreach Quick Guide

This guide summarizes the key ideas from the Ambassador outreach training. It is designed as a quick reference for volunteers staffing tables at plant sales, Earth Day events, and native plant festivals.

Your goal as a Flora Ambassador is simple:

- 🌸 Spark curiosity about Virginia's native plants and show people how they can learn more using Flora of Virginia resources.
- 🌸 You do not need to be a botanist or know every answer. A friendly conversation and a quick demonstration of the App can make a lasting impression.

## Visitors range in age, knowledge, and interest level

People often enjoy talking about their gardens, their yards, or outdoor experiences. Listen first and adjust your conversation accordingly.

Visitor Type	What They Might Want
Curious passerby	Quick demo
Gardener	Native plant ideas
Nature enthusiast	Plant identification tools
Family with kids	Visual or interactive elements

## The 3-Step Engagement Flow

Most successful interactions at outreach tables follow a simple pattern.

### Step 1 — Attract Attention

Encourage people to slow down or approach the table.

Helpful approaches:

- 🌸 Make eye contact and smile
- 🌸 Stand when possible, ideally in front of the table
- 🌸 Offer a friendly greeting

**Tip:** *Avoid starting with a long explanation. Invite curiosity first.*

### Step 2 — Start the Conversation

Learn what the visitor already knows or cares about with these **Starters/Icebreakers**

- 🌸 *“Are you familiar with native plants?” “What’s your favorite?”*
- 🌸 *“Did you know native plants are good for attracting birds or butterflies?”*
- 🌸 *“Have you ever planted any native species in your garden?”*

**Encourage a conversation** about personal experiences with natives and some ecosystem benefits; leads into mission of the Flora and importance of the work.

- 🌸 *“What’s the most unusual or unique native plant in our area that you’ve come across?”*

**Share favorites and interesting finds** to lead to a conversation about the diversity of native flora and the Flora Project’s conservation efforts.

- 🌸 *“Do you enjoy gardening?”*
- 🌸 *“Have you tried identifying wildflowers before?”*
- 🌸 *“Would you like to see a plant ID app for Virginia plants?”*
- 🌸 *“Interested in native plants? We can show you an app that you can use to identify what’s growing in Virginia.”*
- 🌸 *“Would you like to see a plant ID app for Virginia plants?”*

## Step 3 — Share A Key Message

Leave the visitor with one clear takeaway.

### Three Messages You Can Share

When speaking with visitors, use your own words to communicate one of these three core ideas.

1. **Virginia Has Remarkable Native Plant Diversity**

Virginia's forests, fields, and wetlands support thousands of native plant species assembled into natural communities that sustain wildlife and form the foundation of the food web.

2. **The Flora of Virginia Helps People Identify Plants**

The *Flora of Virginia* mobile App helps people identify plants and learn about their characteristics, habitats, and ecological relationships.

3. **Anyone Can Start Exploring Plants**

Gardeners, hikers, students, and curious observers can all use these tools to discover and learn about the plants growing around them (you don't have to be a botanist!).

### Helpful demonstrations

- 🌸 Show the Flora App on your phone or tablet
- 🌸 Demonstrate a plant list or plant search
- 🌸 Point to a plant on the table

### Closing suggestions

- 🌸 *“You can download the App and start identifying plants right away.”*
- 🌸 *“Our website has many more resources about Virginia's native plants.”*

Most interactions last 30–60 seconds, but that is enough to spark interest.

### Practice a short “elevator” pitch that feels comfortable to you

*“Hi! We're volunteers with the Flora of Virginia Project. We help people learn about the native plants growing all around us using the Flora of Virginia app. It's a great tool for gardeners, hikers, or anyone curious about plants. Would you like to see how it works?”*

## Questions Visitors Often Ask

### Is the Flora app free?

The Flora of Virginia app is a one-time purchase of \$19.99, which includes free updates as the app improves over time.

### Does the app work without cell service?

Yes. One of its biggest advantages is that it works offline, so it can be used in remote field locations where there is no cell service.




### Do I have to be a botanist to use it?

Not at all. The app is designed for gardeners, hikers, students, and beginners.

### Does it identify plants from photos?

No, the Flora App does not use AI, instead it helps users narrow plant choices using visible traits and images, which leads to more reliable identification and information about the species and natural communities.




### Why native plants?

-  Support pollinators and wildlife
-  Are adapted to local conditions
-  Help maintain healthy ecosystems

**Do you have any tips for incorporating native plants into a small urban garden or balcony?** *Show how to create a plant list.*

**How do you think native plants compare to non-native species in terms of maintenance and growth?** *Show Habitat and Natural Communities tabs in the App.*

### Where can I learn more?

-  Download the Flora App
-  Visit the Flora of Virginia website
-  Attend native plant events or workshops

**If you do not know an answer, it is perfectly fine to say:**

“That’s a great question—let’s see if we can find it in the Flora App.” There’s a lot of info beyond plant identification in the App.

## Common Event Table Mistakes (and How to Avoid Them)

### Waiting for visitors to speak first

Visitors may walk past if no one engages them.

**Try instead:**

Smile, make eye contact, and offer a simple greeting:

“Hi! Interested in native plants?” “Are you familiar with native plants in our area?”

### Talking too much at the start

Too much information can overwhelm visitors.

**Try instead:**

Begin with a question such as: “Do you have a garden?” or “Have you used a plant ID app before?”

### Too much information on the table

Crowded or messy tables can confuse visitors.

**Try instead:**

Highlight one or two key items, such as:

- 🌸 A plant
- 🌸 The Flora app
- 🌸 A brochure

### Sitting behind the table

Seated volunteers can appear less approachable.

**Try instead:**

Stand or step slightly forward when greeting visitors.

### Feeling you must know everything

Visitors sometimes ask challenging questions. Remember you do not need all the answers. It is perfectly acceptable to look things up together.

## Final Reminder

**Your role is to:**

- 🌸 Welcome people
- 🌸 Spark curiosity
- 🌸 Show them how to begin exploring plants

Often, a brief conversation can inspire someone to start noticing the plants around them in a completely new way.

*Thank you for sharing the wonder of Virginia's native plants.*