

## SELECTING PLANTS for JURISDICTIONAL PROJECTS CARLISLE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

This plant list has been created to assist municipalities, residents and developers in selecting native plants to add to areas that are jurisdictional to the Carlisle Conservation Commission (ConsCom). This list represents plants that have been identified as native to Middlesex County and are also readily available from commercial suppliers. Jurisdictional areas in Carlisle are defined as Resource Areas (vegetated wetlands, intermittent and perennial streams/banks, rivers, ponds and lakes) and Buffer Zones (100' from Resource Areas).

Projects Requiring "Native, Non-Cultivar Plants" should refer to this list when choosing appropriate species.

### **What is a Native Plant?**

The native range of a plant can vary depending on the region referenced. For Carlisle ConsCom projects, Native shall be defined as "Native to Middlesex County, Massachusetts", as documented in the *The Vascular Plants of Massachusetts: A County Checklist* (published by MA Department of Fisheries & Wildlife). Native plants are species that best support local wildlife. When selecting plants for restoration projects, native plants are required. For general landscape use, native plants should be preferred.

### **What is the Function of Native Plants?**

Native plants provide food sources for pollinators, fruit and berries for birds and vegetative cover for small animals. Native plants provide erosion control on banks and slopes and their fallen leaves and needles add nutrients to the soil, creating stable and healthy ecosystems. Native plants reproduce and create the next generation of plants in an ecosystem, providing sustainable and balanced ecosystems.

### **What are Introduced Plants and Why Are they Prohibited in Jurisdictional Projects?**

Non-native, Introduced plants, also known as exotic plants, are considered non-native if they were not present in our region prior to European colonization. Non-native plants have been introduced for centuries and some have become invasive. These plants crowd out our native species and greatly affect the health and diversity of the ecosystem. Introduced plants rarely provide the right nutritional balance in their flowers and fruits that our native species rely upon. These plants often have no local predators and become overpopulated.

### **What is a Cultivar?**

A *cultivar* is a plant variety that was selected and cultivated by humans. A *straight-species*, or genotype, is naturally occurring. It is unclear if cultivar plants are harmful to wetland resource areas or can provide the habitat value to wildlife the way our straight species plants can.

For example, some cultivar plants do not produce flowers, which provide nectar to beneficial pollinators. Other cultivars produce fruits and berries that lack nutritional value to our native

birds and wildlife. Certain cultivars are bred for vibrant leaf color, whose chemicals can be toxic to native caterpillars who feed on the foliage.

Here is a common example of a popular wetland shrub cultivar available at most garden centers and nurseries:

**Straight Species:**

Winterberry Holly  
(*Ilex verticillata*)

**Cultivar:**

Sparkleberry Winterberry  
(*Ilex 'Sparkleberry'*)

'Sparkleberry' Winterberry was bred by humans to have extra large, red berries, valued for their ornamental nature in the home garden. This plant is a cross between our native Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*) and the Japanese Winterberry (*Ilex serrata*). The Japanese Winterberry is an introduced plant and may not support our native wildlife. The extra-large berries could also be too large for the mouths of small, native birds, defeating the purpose of providing habitat value in a wetland or buffer zone.

The straight-species would be a better choice.

For many of these reasons, plant cultivars cannot be approved.

**References:**

Cullina, Melissa Dow, Bryan Connolly, Bruce Sorrie and Paul Somers; *The Vascular Plants of Massachusetts: A County Checklist; First Revision*; Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife; 2009

Leopold, Donald J.; *Native Plants of the Northeast*; Timber Press 2005

Marinelli, Janet (2016, May 26) "*National Wildlife Federation: Native, or Not So Much?*"; retrieved from <https://www.nwf.org/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2016/JuneJuly/Gardening/Cultivars>

Perry, Dr. Leonard (2012) "*Winterberry: Our Native Holly*"; retrieved from <https://pss.uvm.edu/ppp/articles/winberry.html>

## **SOURCES for PURCHASING NATIVE PLANTS**

\*\*When contacting suppliers, it is helpful to indicate that you are looking for straight-species plant material, non-cultivar.

### **Bigelow Nurseries, Inc.**

455 W Main St  
Northborough, MA 01532-2137  
[www.bigelownurseries.com](http://www.bigelownurseries.com)

### **Ernst Conservation Seeds**

9006 Mercer Pike  
Meadville PA 16335  
[www.ernstseed.com](http://www.ernstseed.com)

### **Millican Nursery**

187 Pleasant St.  
Chichester, N.H. 03258  
[www.millicannurseriesinc.com](http://www.millicannurseriesinc.com)

### **Native Plant Trust**

180 Hemenway Road  
Framingham, MA 01701  
[www.nativeplanttrust.org](http://www.nativeplanttrust.org)

### **New England Wetland Plants, Inc.**

820 West Street  
Amherst, MA 01002  
[www.newp.com](http://www.newp.com)

### **Pierson Nurseries, Inc.**

24 Buzzell Road  
Biddeford, Maine 04005  
[www.piersonnurseries.com](http://www.piersonnurseries.com)

### **Sylvan Nurseries**

1028 Horseneck Road  
Westport, MA 02790  
[www.sylvannursery.com](http://www.sylvannursery.com)

### **Weston Nurseries**

160 Pine Hill Rd,  
Chelmsford, MA 01824  
[www.westonnurseries.com](http://www.westonnurseries.com)