
Front Yard Initiative

Plant List

*A New Orleanian's guide to selecting plants
best suited for our environment*

FYI



FRONT YARD INITIATIVE

Acknowledgements

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The Urban Conservancy Team

- Dana Eness, Executive Director
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- Abigail Septon, Research and Data Coordinator

Sources

- Dana Nunez Brown, *Using Plants for Stormwater Management: A Green Infrastructure Guide for the Gulf South* (2013)
- William R. Fontenot, *Native Gardening in the South* Second Edition (1992)

Disclaimer

The Front Yard Initiative (FYI) Plant List is built on a broad base of community knowledge and is intended as a resource for all New Orleans residents.

We can live here, but we have to learn to live with water.

While New Orleans is no stranger to regular flooding, our single approach to water management coupled with the spread of impervious surfaces has only increased the City’s susceptibility to flooding from rain events. Regular deluges have become the new normal, leaving residents asking whether it’s safe to live here. Since then, the Urban Conservancy has strived to not only educate our City’s residents about the need to redefine our relationship with water but also connect them to the resources to create their own solutions to live with water and mitigate flooding.



How to Use This Plant List

We created this plant list as a guide to help Front Yard Initiative (FYI) participants choose plants best suited for their ‘gray to green’ projects. By driving demand for native plants, we’re able to promote the wise stewardship of the urban built environment, a key part of the Urban Conservancy’s mission.

The plants on our list are:

Native

Native plants are well suited to respond to our specific environment: immense amounts of rain mixed with intense heat. New Orleans’ year-round growing season means plants that seem tame elsewhere grow wild and lush here; it also means invasive plants grow out of control. To keep the balance, we must be good stewards and thoughtfully work with our environment.

Identifiers

New Orleans is known for its distinctive architecture. You look around and know exactly where you are. We take pride in our individuality. Shouldn’t residents be given the option to communicate this sense of place through their choice of landscaping as well?

Sourced Locally

The trouble is, you can’t get many of these native options at big box stores; their selection is dictated by national trends, and their quality is questionable (think pollinator plants sprayed with pesticides). Instead, we rely on our local businesses to supply something special, something that gives back to our urban fabric.

Suited to Our Environment

Recent flooding and a rapidly changing climate have shown us we need to make smarter, more sustainable choices to keep New Orleans livable. When it comes to water, we have to slow it down, spread it out, and soak it in. Choosing the right plants goes a long way toward creating a hard-working, low maintenance landscape that can help us do just that. Most plants on our list love ‘wet feet’ and thrive in an environment meant to hold water for periods of time (though not for more than 72 hours: sorry, mosquitoes!).

Beneficial to Wildlife

These same plants are also favored by wildlife. Native plants like the Pawpaw tree and Milkweed are the only food source for the Zebra Swallowtail and Monarch butterflies, respectively. Mulberry is a birder’s best friend.

We welcome you to dive a little deeper into your gardening choices and discover the multifaceted benefits native plants offer our fragile ecosystem. Open the booklet to discover beautiful, attainable options for your own front yard!



Shade Trees



Prickly Ash
Zanthoxylum clava-herculis
LIGHT:
Full Sun
HEIGHT:
36–72'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium



American Beech
Fagus grandiflora
LIGHT:
Partial Shade–Shade
HEIGHT:
50–80'
MAINTENANCE:
Low



Bald Cypress
Taxodium distichum
LIGHT:
Sun, Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
50–75'
MAINTENANCE:
Low



Southern Catalpa
Catalpa bignonioides
LIGHT:
Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
25–40'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium



Pond Cypress
Taxodium ascendens
LIGHT:
Full Sun
HEIGHT:
70–80'
MAINTENANCE:
Low



White Oak
Quercus alba
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
100' +
MAINTENANCE:
Medium



American Sycamore
Platanus occidentalis
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Shade
HEIGHT:
75–100'
MAINTENANCE:
Low

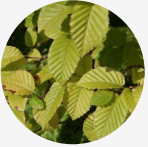


Swamp Red Maple
*Acer rubrum**var. drummondii*
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
40–60'
MAINTENANCE:
Low

Small Trees



Yaupon
Ilex vomitoria
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Shade
HEIGHT:
12–45'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium



American Hornbeam
Carpinus caroliniana
LIGHT:
Partial Shade–Shade
HEIGHT:
20–35'
MAINTENANCE:
Low



Roughleaf Dogwood
Cornus drummondii
LIGHT:
Partial Shade–Shade
HEIGHT:
12–16'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium



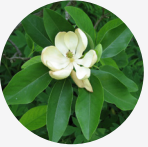
White Fringetree
Chionanthus virginica
LIGHT:
Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
15–30'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium



Two-winged Silverbell
Halesia diptera
LIGHT:
Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
3–15'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium



River Birch
Betula nigra
LIGHT:
Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
30–50'
MAINTENANCE:
Low



Sweet Bay Magnolia
Magnolia virginiana
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
12–35'
MAINTENANCE:
Low



Eastern Red Cedar
Juniperus virginiana
LIGHT:
Full Sun
HEIGHT:
30–65'
MAINTENANCE:
Low

Shrubs



Scarlet Hibiscus
Hibiscus coccineus
LIGHT:
Full Sun
HEIGHT:
3–6'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium



American Beautyberry
Callicarpa americana
LIGHT:
Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
3–6'
MAINTENANCE:
Low



Turk's Cap
Malvaviscus arboreus var. drummondii
LIGHT:
Partial Shade–Shade
HEIGHT:
3–6'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium



Arrowwood
Viburnum dentatum
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
5–12'
MAINTENANCE:
Low



Soldier Mallow
Hibiscus militaris
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
1–3'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium



Muhly Grass
Muhlenbergia capillaris
LIGHT:
Full Sun
HEIGHT:
1–3'
MAINTENANCE:
Low

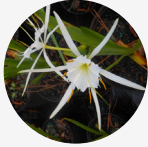


Dwarf Palmetto
Sabal minor
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Shade
HEIGHT:
3–6'
MAINTENANCE:
Low

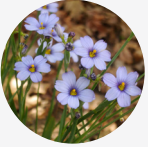


Dwarf Waxmyrtle
Morella cerifera
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
3–6'
MAINTENANCE:
Low

Flowering Plants



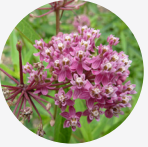
Spider Lily
Hymenocallis lreosme
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
1–3'
MAINTENANCE:
Low



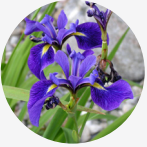
Blue-eyed Grass
Sisyrinchium angustifolium
LIGHT:
Full Sun
HEIGHT:
1.5–2'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium



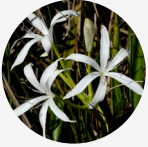
Cardinal Flower
Lobelia cardinalis
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Shade
HEIGHT:
3–6'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium



Swamp Milkweed
Asclepias incarnata
LIGHT:
Full Sun
HEIGHT:
4–5'
MAINTENANCE:
Low



Louisiana Iris
Iris brevicaulis
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
0–1'
MAINTENANCE:
Low



Crinum Lily
Crinum americanum
LIGHT:
Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
2–3'
MAINTENANCE:
Low



Coneflower
Rudbeckia maxima
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
3–6'
MAINTENANCE:
Low



Stokes Aster
Stokesia laevis
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
1–3'
MAINTENANCE:
Low

Edibles



SMALL TREE

Wild Plum
Prunus americana
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
15–25'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium



LARGE TREE

Black Walnut
Juglans nigra
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
72–100'
MAINTENANCE:
Low



SMALL TREE

Mexican Plum
Prunus mexicana
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
15–25'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium



SHRUB

Elderberry
Sambucus nigra
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
5–12'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium



LARGE TREE

Pecan
Carya illinoensis
LIGHT:
Full Sun
HEIGHT:
70–100'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium



LARGE TREE

Persimmon
Diospyros virginiana
LIGHT:
Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
36–72'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium



SHRUB

Sand Blackberry
Rubus cuneifolius
LIGHT:
Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
3–4'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium



SMALL TREE

Red Mulberry
Morus rubra
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Full Shade
HEIGHT:
12–36'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium

Plants of Interest



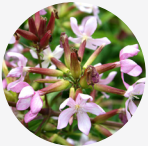
FLOWERING PLANT

Maypop Vine
Passiflora incarnata
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
0–25'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium



SMALL TREE

Pawpaw
Asimina triloba
LIGHT:
Full Sun
HEIGHT:
15–20'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium



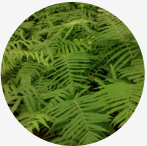
FLOWERING PLANT

Soapwort
Saponaria officinalis
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
1–2'
MAINTENANCE:
Low



SHRUB

Virginia Chain Fern
Woodwardia virginica
LIGHT:
Partial Shade
HEIGHT:
2–3'
MAINTENANCE:
Low



SHRUB

Southern Shield Fern
Thelypteris kunthii
LIGHT:
Partial Shade–Shade
HEIGHT:
1–3'
MAINTENANCE:
Low



SHRUB

Cinnamon Fern
Osmunda cinnamomea
LIGHT:
Full Sun–Shade
HEIGHT:
3–6'
MAINTENANCE:
Low



SHRUB

Royal Fern
Osmunda regalis
LIGHT:
Partial Shade–Shade
HEIGHT:
2–5'
MAINTENANCE:
Low



SHRUB

Sensitive Fern
Onoclea sensibilis
LIGHT:
Partial Shade–Shade
HEIGHT:
1–3'
MAINTENANCE:
Medium

Urban Conservancy

About Us

Since 2001, the Urban Conservancy (UC) has catalyzed equitable practices and policies related to land use and the local economy through education, research, and advocacy. We promote sustainable solutions to New Orleans’ distinct land use needs through community, K-12, and neighborhood-level engagement. We work with partners to devise systems (of thought, of engineering, of urban design) that wisely manage the water that falls on our sinking, flood-prone, coastal city and educate the public about ways they can help in efforts to increase New Orleans’ long-term resilience.

Our Projects

The **Front Yard Initiative (FYI)** is the UC’s paving removal incentive program designed to improve New Orleans’ safety, stormwater management, and aesthetics while growing the green sector.

Building Active Stewardship in New Orleans (BASIN) is the UC’s program for school-aged children to introduce them to the vocabulary, concepts, and skills required to promote the wise stewardship of our urban built environment and participate in our growing network of green sector professionals.

StayLocal (SL) is Greater New Orleans’ independent business alliance. SL creates an environment for local businesses to thrive through research, education, and advocacy.

UC also hosts a 6CE hour workshop, *Opportunities for Contractors in Stormwater Management*, as well as educational forums.

Get Involved



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