

Native Planting Project Enhances Landscape at Savage Highlands

A recent native planting effort at Savage Highlands State Park is helping to beautify the site while also promoting long-term ecological health—and we have Deep Creek Lake NRMA Technician and Naturalist Kevin Spray to thank for leading the way.

With a strong background in botany, Kevin brought his expertise to this project, designing and implementing a native landscape installation that supports pollinators, improves biodiversity, and enhances the visitor experience. Before planting began, the site was carefully weeded by hand. This included the removal of many non-native species and at least one known invasive—Chinese silver grass (*Miscanthus sinensis*).

To reduce future weed pressure, mulch was applied throughout the planting, with a focus on the periphery and areas adjacent to the lawn and seating space. The heart of the planting was intentionally designed to be densely populated with native species, allowing the vegetation itself to suppress weeds naturally through competition.

Kevin's thoughtful species selection took into account varying light and moisture conditions across the site. Areas under the patio and toward the right side of the slope remain shaded and moist longer, while the left side receives more sun and dries out faster. Native plants chosen for each zone were well-suited to thrive under these conditions.

Below is the complete plant list for those interested in learning more about the species used in the project. Species marked with an asterisk (*) are considered non-native or of questionable nativity to Maryland but are native to the broader region and often cultivated in the native plant industry outside of their natural range.

This project is a wonderful example of how strategic planting and native species can work together to create a sustainable, beautiful, and low-maintenance landscape. Many thanks to Kevin for sharing his talents with the Savage Highlands team!

Black cohosh (*Actaea racemosa*)
Anise hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*)*
Nodding onion (*Allium cernuum*)
Plantain-leaf pussytoes (*Antennaria plantaginifolia*)
Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)
Butterflyweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
Blue false indigo (*Baptisia australis*)
Eastern sweetshrub (*Calycanthus floridus*)*
Eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)
Maryland golden aster (*Chrysopsis mariana*)
Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)*
White wood aster (*Eurybia divaricata*)
Shrubby St. John's wort (*Hypericum prolificum*)
Dense blazing star (*Liatris spicata*)

Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)
Scarlet bee balm (*Monarda didyma*)
Wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*)
Spotted bee balm (*Monarda punctata*)
Wild quinine (*Parthenium integrifolium*)
Foxglove beardtongue (*Penstemon digitalis*)
Hairy beardtongue (*Penstemon hirsutus*)
Obedient plant (*Physostegia virginiana*)
Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium reptans*)
Hoary mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum incanum*)
Clustered mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*)
Narrowleaf mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum tenuifolium*)
Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)
Orange coneflower (*Rudbeckia fulgida*)
Cup plant (*Silphium perfoliatum*)*
Zigzag goldenrod (*Solidago flexicaulis*)
Blue wood aster (*Symphyotrichum cordifolium*)
New England aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*)
Carolina lupine (*Thermopsis villosa*)*
Culver's root (*Veronicastrum virginicum*)