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PRESS RELEASE

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It Stands To Reason, Plant Native This Season

With longer days and warmer temperatures, many of us are planning to spruce up our yards and businesses to enjoy the outdoors. When the time comes to put your green thumb to work, think about the benefits of planting native plants.

Native or indigenous plants are those that naturally occur in our coastal and Chesapeake Bay watersheds. Using native plants will increase the chances that the plants will thrive in your yard, as they are suited to our soils and climate. Native plant species require less watering than non-natives do. A yard with 10,000 square feet of turf requires 10,000 gallons of water per summer to stay green. Using native plants reduces the amount of water we need to use. We also reduce the amount of excess water that runs off our yards and into our bays during rain events. Using less water is good news for both the bays and the gardener.

In addition to increased water use, traditional lawns and gardens require high maintenance and receive large inputs of pesticides and fertilizers. When it rains, lawn chemicals find their way into our local creeks and ditches, and have impacts in our coastal and Chesapeake bays. Native plants are able to make better use of rainwater than typical lawn turf. They are also better at trapping and removing nutrients and pollutants so that they do not run off into our bays.

An incredible fringe benefit of the native plant garden is that local and migratory wildlife use native plant species for food, cover, and rearing young. When we replace manicured lawns with a variety of trees, shrubs, grasses and flowers, these plants provide habitat for a variety of butterflies, bees, and birds. Native plants help preserve the balance and beauty of our natural bay ecosystems.

Native plant gardens save us time, money, and water, and require less regular maintenance than traditional lawns. Native plant gardens are more interesting than lawns, because they attract birds and butterflies. By using native plants, you can help maintain the health and beauty of our coastal ecosystems.

If you want to purchase native plants (and delicious heirloom tomatoes) for your yard or business, please join the Assateague Coastal Trust (ACT) for the 12th annual Native and Heirloom Plant Festival, scheduled for May 7th. The Festival begins at 8:00 a.m. and is held at historic Golden Quarter Farm, on Route 376 (Assateague Road) about 4 miles east of Berlin, MD. The farm is a perfect venue for a Festival that combines gardening activities, craft exhibits, nature walks and a children's program.

Advance orders may be placed now with ACT's secure on-line order form. The forms may be printed out and mailed to ACT's office with a check, but customers are encouraged to use ACT's easy, secure, on-line order form with Master Card or VISA. Pre-orders of plant packages are required, and pre-orders of heirloom tomatoes are highly recommended. For more information, call Assateague Coastal Trust at (410) 629-1538 or visit www.actforbays.org.