

SEVEN BENDS AND FRIENDS



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF SEVEN BENDS NURSERY



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Letter from lara

Dear flourishing friends,

There's no doubt; we're in the heat of the summer in these Virginia hills.

Although I am not a fan of heat and humidity, I do truly look forward to every season in the valley. Summer in Virginia is verdant, green, and loud with life. The thick vegetation on a forest's edge makes the night even darker, setting a perfect stage for the glow of fireflies.

Although the heat of summer is a slower time for the nursery, we keep busy with consultations and growing as many plants as we can. We do wish we could show off our plants more during this time, however, because it is **the season** of peak beauty for our plants!

When things get too sticky, the adjacent river offers quick respite. That river, the beautiful Nork Fork, is the lifeblood of our endeavor and the nursery's namesake. We have a responsibility to do what we can to keep its water clean, cool, and flowing. And we know that a healthy river is supported by native plants.

So, we plant!

Join us?

lara

Riparian Buffers

MORE THAN JUST TREES BY A RIVER

Rivers and Riparian Buffers

On a hot July day in Virginia, there is nothing more refreshing than taking a day trip to the river! We are lucky that Seven Bends Nursery sits next to the North Fork of the Shenandoah, the banks of which host many a lunch break. Sometimes we even take a dip in its crisp, clean, slow-moving water. Even if we aren't cooling off in the river, the shade of a Sycamore tree holding up the river's edge is enough to cool us down on a hot day. These wooded edges of the river are home to a wide array of animals that occasionally grant us a glimpse of their lives. These wooded edges serve us so well; they are habitats for native wildlife, protect against erosion, and overall, contribute to the clean water we recreate in and survive off of! This important habitat is called a riparian buffer!



New Field Guide Available!

This guide highlights 150 plants native to the northern Ridge and Valley ecoregions of Virginia, selected with the gardener in mind.

Glossy, spiral bound pages; large font, and symbols denoting environmental requirements make it the perfect accompaniment when planning and shopping for your native garden.

It also includes:

- information on how to create a functional ecosystem
- examples of species from regional habitats
- six garden design templates
- alternatives for commonly sold invasive plants
- list of informational resources

Published May 2023 as part of the Plant Virginia Natives initiative.

Order [here!](#)





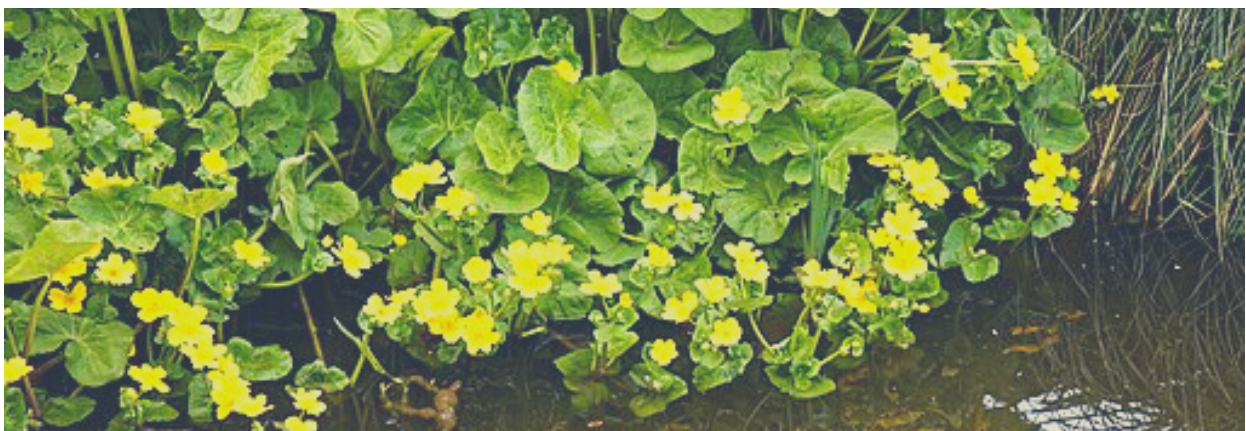
What is a riparian buffer?

Riparian buffers are thick strips of vegetated, sometimes forested areas, that trace the edges of streams, creeks, rivers, ponds, and lakes. Over time these important landscape features have been cut down or degraded due to development and/or agricultural practices. Restoration efforts aim to return the native plants that create a riparian area through replanting native trees and shrubs, wildflowers, and grasses. Such efforts require a lot of plants as the recommended buffer width is at least 30 meters (100 feet) wide!

Why are riparian buffers important?

Trees and vegetative cover in riparian buffers provide several services:

- Reduce erosion
 - Interconnecting roots of trees and vegetation within a riparian buffer hold soil in place during heavy rainfall. When plants are present along moving water they keep sediment from washing into waterways and river banks from eroding.
- Filter sediments and pollution
 - In a world where we are adding fertilizers to lawns, gardens, and agricultural fields as well as waste produced by livestock, excess nutrients become part of runoff in our watershed. Excess phosphorus, nitrogen, and heavy metals from fertilizers that become part of runoff are major pollutants in watersheds. Roots of trees and plants along waterways reduce the amount of excess nutrients entering streams.
- Provide habitat
 - There are many animals that call the riparian buffer home - think of all the native mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians that our region is home to! Riparian buffers provide shelter, food, and water for native wildlife. Riparian buffers also serve as corridors, connecting patches of habitat together and enabling the migration of individuals in search of food, territory, and mates.





What can you do to help riparian buffers?

Virginia is home to some large rivers such as the Potomac, Rappahannock, York, and James Rivers, fed by smaller creeks and tributaries that are affected by our actions miles away. One of the best ways to help protect our waterways is to plant more natives. If you have a small body of water on your property you could undertake a project of your own planting native trees, shrubs, and grasses around the area! Even if you don't have a creek on your property, planting native plants can help reduce runoff and increase the amount of water entering the soil.

River conservation at a large scale is a huge undertaking and benefits from community involvement for long-term success. If you want to be more involved, consider joining an organization dedicated to protecting and caring for our rivers. The [Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River](#) is one example that we are particularly fond of. Visit their website to learn about the work they do in river protection and education. You can..... join as a member, attend volunteer planting days, and learn about and support legislation that protects our waterways and riparian buffers. Be an active voice in your community and let's plant more buffers!

Resources:

If you are someone who owns property with streams or rivers that run through them there are programs such as the [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program \(CREP\)](#) and the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#) that help you plan, plant, and maintain a riparian buffer or wildflower meadows on your property.



Plants Commonly found in our Riparian Buffers:



Buttonbush



Cardinal flower



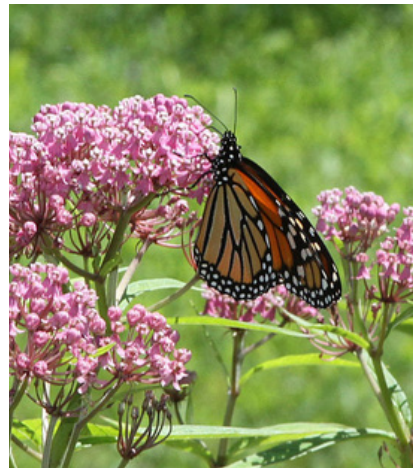
Pawpaw



River oats



Black willow



Swamp milkweed



Black cherry



Blue vervain



Sycamore