

CALL TO ACTION

Our National Parks – no matter how grand in scale – are too small and separated from one another to adequately preserve the native trees, plants, insects and animals that our ecosystems depend upon to survive and thrive.

Thus, the concept for the Homegrown National Park®: a national challenge to homeowners, property owners, land managers, farmers and anyone with some soil to plant in – to extend our national parks into our yards, communities, and surrounding lands by planting native and removing invasive species.



THE GOAL

Initially, 20 million acres of native plantings in the U.S. This represents approximately ½ of the green lawns of privately-owned properties.



TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE

We are at a critical point where we are losing so many native plant and animal species that the ecosystem services we rely upon (oxy-gen, clean water, flood control, pollination, pest control, etc.) will become seriously compromised. However, if many people make small changes, we can restore healthy ecological networks and weather the challenges ahead.

HOMEGROWN NATIONAL PARK® MAP



SCAN ME

The MAP enables anyone who plants natives and/or removes invasives to report their accomplishments by State, County and Zip Code. A gauge shows progress towards the goal of 20 million acres of native plantings in the U.S.

Scan the code or visit: <https://homegrownnationalpark.org>

START DIGGING!



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LET'S GET EVERYONE ON THE MAP!



Front cover: Radim Schreiber/FireflyExperience.org



WHAT EACH OF US CAN DO

1. SHRINK THE LAWN AND LEAVE THE LEAVES!

Think, muse, strategize about how you might reduce the area that is now lawn. Maybe start by planting a very small area (perhaps a mini meadow), leaving enough green grass for your paths and recreational use. It doesn't matter how small or how large your plantings are; what's most important is that you get started, and you get on the MAP! Leave the leaves wherever you can! Park your leaf blower and give yourself a break from the rake! The leaves that stay on your property are going to return the nutrients that were taken up by the trees' roots in the spring back to the soil so the tree gets to use them again the following year. Leaves are also the perfect mulch. Start by raking up areas of the lawn you know you will keep as lawn. Use those leaves to smother the grass in beds around each of your trees, effectively reducing part of the area that is now grass. Come spring you can plant in your new beds.

2. REMOVE INVASIVE SPECIES

Invasive plants are ecological tumors that spread unchecked into our local ecosystems, seriously degrading the ability of these ecosystems to function. If every property owner removed the most egregious invasives, the goal of ridding the U.S. of these troublemakers, or at least reducing their seed dispersal to manageable levels, would be largely realized. Start removing the ornamentals you now have that are known to be serious invasive species in Rappahannock County, e.g.: Callery (Bradford) Pear • Privet • Japanese Stiltgrass • Burning Bush • Autumn Olive • Japanese Honeysuckle • Miscanthus Grass • Bush Honeysuckle • Glossy Buckthorn • Oriental Bittersweet • Porcelainberry • Alianthus • Garlic Mustard • Japanese Stiltgrass

3. GENEROUSLY PLANT THE PLANTS THAT DO THE MOST GOOD

A first step in reducing your lawn can be adding keystone plants in an area that is now lawn. You might choose to plant an oak tree and build a bed with leaf litter around it. BOOM! New powerhouse tree and less lawn! If you have a bigger property, a field, a farm or a large landholding, consider planting more native trees and creating a meadow or two or three!!

To realize the ecological potential of our landscapes, most of us have



to increase the abundance and diversity of our plantings. If you have one tree in your yard, consider adding two more. The idea is to plant groves of trees at the same density at which they occur naturally in a forest. Research indicates that a few types of native plants ("keystone genera") form the backbone of local ecosystems, particularly in terms of producing the food that fuels insects. Landscapes that do not contain one or more species from keystone genera will have failed food webs, even if the diversity of other plants is very high. To find the keystone plants that host the most caterpillars and native bees, scan the code or visit: <https://www.nwf.org/Garden-for-Wildlife/About/Native-Plants/keystone-plants-by-ecoregion>



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4. REDUCE YOUR NIGHTTIME LIGHT POLLUTION

Research is showing that our porch and security lights are major causes of insect decline. Consider turning off your lights at night. Or use **motion sensor security lights** that light up only when an intruder enters your yard. If nothing else, replace the white bulb in your lights with yellow or amber tinted LED bulbs. These color wavelengths are the least attractive to nocturnal insects.

5. NETWORK WITH NEIGHBORS & GET ON THE HOMEGROWN NATIONAL PARK® MAP

Be a role model for your neighbors. As you transform your property by planting natives in tasteful ways, it is likely your neighbors will follow suit. For a Homegrown National Park Yard Sign, scan the code or visit: <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/yard-sign>



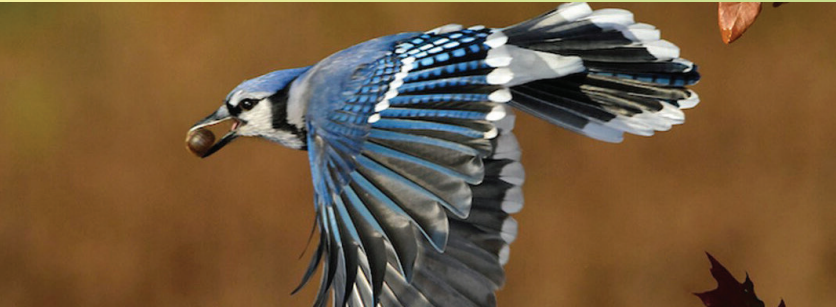
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6. BUILD A CONSERVATION HARDSCAPE

- Each year millions of toads, frogs, and other small creatures become trapped in our window wells where they slowly starve to death. Installing inexpensive **window well covers** can reduce these needless deaths to zero.
- Set your **mower height no lower than 3 inches**. This will give you healthier, greener grass that requires less watering but also mows

safely over a box turtle or toad! Try not to mow in the evening when many nocturnal species leave their hiding places.

- Install a bubbler. Small water features with gentle gurgling sounds are irresistible to migrating and resident birds.



7. CREATE CATERPILLAR PUPATION SITES UNDER YOUR TREES

More than 90% of the caterpillars that develop on trees drop to the ground and pupate within the organic matter on the ground or within chambers they form underground. It is best to replace lawn under trees with well-planted beds with groundcovers appropriate for your area. It's easy, you can leave leaf litter under your trees, rocks, and old tree stumps, as well as plant wild ginger, foam flowers, wood poppies, ferns, mayapples, etc.



8. DO NOT SPRAY OR FERTILIZE

Insecticides and herbicides are antithetical to the goals of HOMEGROWN NATIONAL PARK®. Less evident is that fertilizers are also unnecessary. Creating soils rich in organic matter is entirely sufficient for healthy plants. If herbicides must be used, apply them judiciously and in small quantities. See What Is the Best Way to Get Rid of Invasive Plants? - YouTube



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