

Settlers kept some records, but did not thoroughly or accurately record the ways of Native Americans before those ways were changed or lost.

In the 1910's and 20's, a cultural and political revival occurred for the Algonquian peoples. The Powhatan and what was left of the Nanticoke, created associations meant to push for Native American rights. The Great Depression and World War II halted these efforts because people were more focused on their immediate survival. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act reinvigorated the movement towards rights for Native Americans. In the 1980's, Virginia passed legislation that officially recognized the Powhatan Tribes.

Descendants of the Nanticoke, Piscataway, and Powhatan tribes continue to have a presence in the Chesapeake Bay region today. Understanding and preserving customs of Native Americans encourages respect for people who are different than ourselves, broadens our knowledge about the very land we live on, and promotes respect for our natural environment.

About the Garden

The Little Library Gardens Native American Collection is an opportunity for the visitor to learn how Native Americans in this area would have used local, native plants for medicine and food. The collection has two parts, one focused on ferns, and one that focuses on other plants that are found in the shrub cover. There are also native upper and under story trees in the vicinity of the garden that had food or medicinal uses. This Native American Collection is located within the mixed forest area known to the Piscataway and Powhatan peoples.

For the purpose of this garden, it has been assumed that plants native to the mixed forests of Virginia were used in a similar fashion by the various Native American tribes that lived among the same plants up and down the eastern seaboard. Consequently, some of the uses given for the plants grown in this garden are derived from records of the Cherokee, Delaware, and Iroquois in addition to what little is known about the ways of the Algonquian speaking tribes.

American Indians In Northern Virginia

American Indians are said to have lived in this area for more than 11,000 years. The Chesapeake Bay area was home to the Nanticoke, Piscataway, and Powhatan tribes who shared the Algonquian language. All of these Algonquian tribes were accustomed to living on the banks of the rivers and major tributaries to the Chesapeake Bay. They relied on these water courses for food and communication. Farming areas were situated next to waterways, and the woods around these areas were used for hunting and foraging.

The Nanticoke lived in the wetlands areas of Delaware. Plants that grow in wetlands were used for food and clothing. The Powhatan and the Piscataway tribes lived north and south of the Potomac river, including southeast Virginia. They lived in zones of mixed forest that were dense with nuts and berries.

The mixed forest is made up of three stories. The upper story, with trees that can grow up to 100 feet, includes various species of oak and pine. The understory consists of plants growing up to 30 feet, such as dogwoods and sassafras. The bottommost layer is the shrub cover, which includes blueberries and spicebush.

In the 16th century, the Algonquian tribes of the Chesapeake Bay, were among the first Native Americans to encounter Europeans. With the establishment of Jamestown in 1607, settlers started to overtake Powhatan people and lands. This was the beginning of American colonization.

By the early 1700's, the colonists had continued to expand their territory, forcing most of the Nanticoke and Piscataway to leave the Chesapeake Bay Area for Pennsylvania, Ohio, and eventually towards Canada, where they assimilated into the Iroquois and Lenape tribes.

Those who stayed behind were restricted in their freedom of movement. Even though many continued to farm, trap, hunt, and fish, old customs became harder to maintain. Without a written language, many of the traditions of the Algonquian were lost.

Quartzite Rock

The Nanticoke people used quartzite to make their arrowheads. Quartzite is readily found in this area, and was formed through geologic processes 544 million years ago. A sample of quartzite can be found in the fern collection.

Further Information

Learn more about Native Americans in [The Powhatan Indians of Virginia, Their Traditional Culture](#), by Helen C. Rountree, University of Oklahoma Press (July 10, 2013).

Learn more how Native Americans used plants in [Native American Ethnobotany](#), by Daniel E. Moerman, 1998, Timber Press, Inc., Portman, OR; or at: <http://naeb.brit.org/> for an online database of foods, drugs, dyes and fibers of Native American peoples, derived from plants.

Visit the ongoing exhibition: "[Return to a Native Place: Algonquian Peoples of the Chesapeake](#)" online and at the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

The Ayr Hill Garden Club is the oldest garden club in the National Capital Area Garden Clubs. It was founded in 1929 and named after Ayr Hill, the original name for Vienna. The club also maintains the **Little Library Garden Colonial Herb Collection** at the back of the Little Library, the **Pollinator Garden** at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, the **W&OD Trail Garden** at the intersection of Maple Avenue next to Whole Foods, the **Children's Discovery Garden** by the caboose and the **Salsbury Spring Native Garden**, at the corner of Windover Avenue and Lawyers Road. More information about Ayr Hill Garden Club can be found at www.ayrhillgardenclub.org.

Historic Vienna, Inc. was incorporated in 1976 to preserve the history of the town of Vienna. The Little Library is operated by Historic Vienna, Inc. and is open the first Sunday of the month from March to December and at special events. More information can be found at www.historicviennainc.org.

Little Library Gardens

Native American Collection



Located alongside the
Little Library
At the corner of Church and Mill Street

Guided tours available by appointment at the
Freeman Store and Museum

Installed and maintained by



Perennial Collection

Asarum canadense Canadian Wild Ginger

Medicine (A) infusion of roots given to small children for convulsions and fevers. (I) Roots used as a tonic for colds, coughs, scarlet fever and typhoid fever. Plant used to protect people from witchcraft. (Semi Evergreen)



Cimicifuga racemosa Black Cohosh, Black Bugbane

Medicine (I) Roots or plant used for rheumatism in a steam or soak bath, roots taken to help in breastfeeding. (D) Roots used as a tonic. (Summer Blooms)

Claytonia virginica Virginia Spring Beauty

Medicine (I) Powdered roots given to children with convulsions. Food (A) corm cooked and eaten like potatoes. (Spring Blooms)



Gaultheria procumbens Eastern Teaberry, Wintergreen

Medicine (A) Used for headaches and aches. (D) plants used with poke root, mullein leaves, wild cherry and black cohosh as a tonic for rheumatism. (I) Roots taken for tapeworms, arthritis, and colds. Food (A) Berries used as a snack. (I) Fruit mashed and made into small cakes. (Evergreen)

Hepatica nobilis Sharp-lobed Hepatica

Medicine (I) Plants used to help women in labor and taken for shortness of breath. Roots used to tell fortune and chewed by women to bewitch men. (Spring Blooms)



Jeffersonia diphylla Twinleaf

Medicine (C) Used for sores, ulcers and dropsy (I) Used for diarrhea.

Lindera benzoin Northern Spicebush

Medicine (I) Leaves and twigs taken for colds and in steam baths (R) Taken for menstruation pains. Food (C) Used as a spice to flavor opossum or ground hog. (Spring Blooms)

Lobelia siphilitica Great Blue Lobelia

Medicine (I) Used for coughs. Used to help against bewitchments. (Summer Blooms)

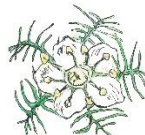


Mitchella repens Partridge Berry

Medicine (D) Roots used as in a steam bath for rheumatism. (I) Plant used for labor pains, stomach aches and kidney problems. Also used in love medicine. Food (I) Fruit mashed, made into small cakes that are dried used in the future. (Evergreen)

Mitella diphylla Bishop's Cap, Two leaf Miterwort

Medicine (I) Whole plant taken for vomiting and as a wash to counteract bad luck. Infusion of plant used as drops in sore eyes. (Spring Blooms)



Penstemon digitalis Bush Penstemon

Medicine (I) Plant is used to cure a love medicine. Used to help with breast feeding. (Summer Blooms)

Podophyllum peltatum May Apple

Medicine (D) Roots used as a laxative. (I) Leaves with other plants used to soak corn seeds before planting. Also used for boils. Food (I) Fruit mashed and made into small cakes that is dried for future use. Dried fruit eaten when hunting. (Spring Blooms)



Polygonatum biflorum King Solomon's Seal

Medicine (R) Roots applied as a salve to sores, cuts, and bruises. Food (C) Roots dried, pounded into flour and made into bread. Leaves cooked and eaten as greens. (Spring Blooms)

Prenanthes alba Lion's Foot, White Rattlesnake Root

Medicine (I) Mashed roots applied to dog bites and rattlesnake bites. (Fall Blooms)

Sanguinaria canadensis Bloodroot

Medicine (A) Used as a tonic for heart problems (D) Combined with other roots and used for stomach aches. (I) Plants taken for diarrhea and tapeworms. Dried plant used as snuff



for head colds. Mashed plant put on sores and cuts. Dried roots used for ear drops and sore eyes. Dye (A) Red dye for clothing, skin, and weapons. (Spring Blooms)

Solidago flexicaulis Zig Zag Goldenrod

Medicine (I) Compound of plant taken for gastric distress and heart disease. (C) Used for fevers. (Fall Blooms)



Thalictrum dioicum Early Meadowrue

Medicine (I) Roots used as a wash for sore eyes. Roots taken for heart problems. (C) Roots used for diarrhea and vomiting. (Spring Blooms)



Vaccinium angustifolium Lowbush Blueberry

Medicine (A) Infusion of leaves given to babies for colic. Food (A) Berries used fresh or made into preserves and fruit pemmican (I) fruit mashed, make into small cakes and then dried for future use. (Spring Blooms)

Viburnum acerifolium Maple Leaf Viburnum

Medicine (I) Infusion of bark mashed and applied as poultice for pain caused by witchcraft also used for cramps and colic. (Late Spring Blooms)

Fern Collection

Dennstaedtia punctilobula Eastern Hay-scented Fern

Medicine (C) Compound infusion taken for chills.



Dryopteris marginalis Marginal Woodfern

Medicine (C) Infusion of root used for rheumatism, emetic and toothache. Fiber (I) Made into pillows for children to prevent bed-wetting.

Onoclea sensibilis Sensitive Fern

Medicine (I) Used for arthritis, tuberculosis and infection. Mashed leaves used on deep cuts. Food (I) Cooked and seasoned with salt and pepper or butter. Fiber (I) Made into pillows and used by children to prevent bed-wetting.



Osmunda cinnamomea Cinnamon Fern

Medicine (I) Taken for headaches, joint pain and colds. Fiber (I) Made into pillows and used by children to prevent bed-wetting.

Polystichum acrostichoides Christmas Fern

Medicine (C) Compound of root applied for rheumatism. Compound used for toothache, colds and diarrhea. Smashed roots applied to children's back and head for red spots. Food (C) Fiddle heads used for food.

Pteridium aquilinum Western Brackenfern

Medicine (C) Root used as a tonic and as an antiseptic. (I) Taken for diarrhea, rheumatism and tuberculosis. Root shaped into person and placed in coffin for witchcraft purposes.



Nearby Native Trees

Acer saccharinum Silver Maple

Medicine (C) Bark used for cramps, hives and as a wash for sore eyes. Hunting (I) Plant used as an aid on traps. Food (A) Used to make sugar (I) Bark dried and made into bread. Fiber (C) Wood used to make baskets and furniture. (I) Wood used for bowls.

Betula nigra River Birch

Medicine (C) Leaves used for colds and dysentery.



Cercis canadensis Eastern Redbud

Medicine (C) Bark used for whooping cough. (D) Bark used for vomiting and fever. Food (C) Flowers eaten by children.



Ilex opaca American Holly

Medicine (C) Berries used for colic. Dye (C) Berries used as a dye. Tool (C) Wood used to make spoons and carved into decorations.

