

A wreath made of various autumn flowers and dried grasses is hanging on a wall of dark wooden shingles. The flowers include yellow chrysanthemums, pink chrysanthemums, and small white flowers. The dried grasses are light-colored and hang down from the wreath.

Great Swamp Watershed Association Presents:

Crafting with Autumn New Jersey natives!

First, let's be clear. A few terms to be familiar with.

- **Natives-** Plants and animals can be native or introduced to an area or region and still not necessarily be “invasive.”



- **Invasives-** Plants and animals can be native, foreign or “naturalized,” and still be considered invasive.



- **Weeds?-** Plants can be a nuisance, or undesirable and prevalent, or delicate and beautiful. So why does it matter?



Chicory



What do we mean by native plants?

- ▶ Native or **indigenous** plants are plants that traditionally grow in a particular region and geologic time. They will have **grown, developed** and **existed naturally** within the region since their emergence.
- ▶ Native plants often have **co-evolved** over millennium with the pollinators and critters that also live in the region. These plants often rely on woodland creatures such as squirrels, chipmunks, birds and humans to **spread their seeds** throughout the ecosystem.
- ▶ Within their natural range, native plant are often **abundant** and **versatile**, often being **well adapted** to the climatic conditions of the area, as well as the soil profile, amounts of sunlight and precipitation. They can often even outcompete invasives if given the chance.

How do “Invasive” plants become established in the first place?

- **Invasive** plants or plants that would **not naturally** be found growing or occurring in the region can become **established** through a myriad of different ways.
- They can be **planted intentionally** because they are prized for their exotic look. Big box stores will often sell non-native plants which consumers unknowingly plant throughout their yards!
- They are also sometimes used as **packaging or crafting** material. Due to their relative abundance and quick rates of reproduction, invasive plants are sometimes viewed as dispensable for packaging, or easily acquired for crafts!
- But they can also spread their seeds naturally through waterbodies, **wind dispersal**, vast networks of runners, or root systems, and can also be **aided by humans** and other animals just as native plants can.



More examples of crafting with invasives

► While both goldenrod and phragmites can be considered “**weeds**,” goldenrod is native to New Jersey and beneficial to pollinators.

► Phragmites on the other hand is a non-native invasive, that **outcompetes** our native reed grasses and cattails and can form dense **monocultures** especially in wet marshy areas and in wetlands or creek beds. Once established it can be nearly impossible to eradicate!





How do invasive plants outcompete and threaten the survival of natives?

- Regardless of how they become **established**, once they have taken root, invasive plants **out-compete** native plants for vital nutrients, water and sunlight.
- They often green up and **leaf out before** natives and **retain** their leaves longer into the growing season.
- Deer will often avoid invasive plants in favor of consuming natives, due to **palatability**, lack of defense mechanisms and co-evolution with the native plant species.
- Some invasive plants can even **alter** the surrounding environments to make them more **hospitable** for the host plants and less so for the pre-existing native plants!

Benefits of choosing native plants!

- ▶ Native plants are **beautiful** in their own right, and require **little to no care** in order to thrive on their own because they have evolved here over time.
- ▶ They offer **seasonal** pops of color to the countryside and provide a **source of food** for birds and animals prior to a lengthy hibernation period.
- ▶ Unlike **invasive** plants such as oriental bittersweet, and phragmites, when critters, pick seeds off your doorstep, or the wind gently blows their seed pods across your yard, native plants are a **blessing** to the environment!
- ▶ Also you will be able to **proudly** inform guests and family members over the holidays why you chose to craft with only **native plants** over invasives, for the health of the ecosystem!



Final Thoughts and Questions?



- Crafting with natives is a fun and easy way to bring the beauty of nature right to your doorstep!
- When you choose native materials you are benefitting the ecosystem!
- If you are not sure whether a plant is native to the area, always be sure and do some research before planting or moving the material.
- Always avoid using invasive plant material whenever possible as it only assists the invasive in spreading further.



On to the Crafting!

- ▶ We will work on putting together some beautiful decorations together. First choose a native grape vine wreath to use as your base for the wreath or centerpiece.
- ▶ Next select some native materials to work with and begin to “process” them, by trimming away any excess leaves or material that is not necessary.
- ▶ Then carefully intertwine their stalks and stems throughout the wreath, continue to add to your decoration until you are satisfied.
- ▶ As a finishing touch, perhaps consider adding a decorative bow or ribbon and affix any pinecones, or sweetgum balls that you would like to include.
- ▶ Once you are finished, take your new decoration home and enjoy it, while knowing that you are doing your part to be a conscientious steward of the land!

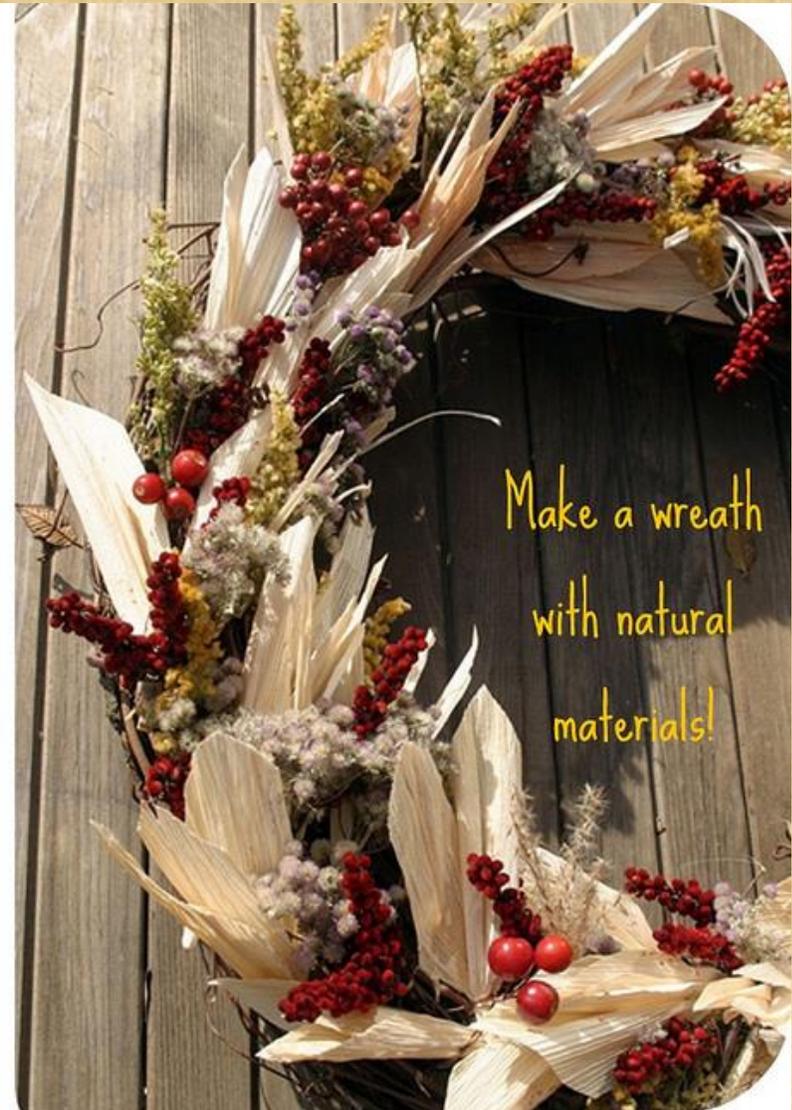
Some suggestions for designs!



More examples!



More Ideas!



Decorative Sumac seed clusters!



We hope that you will join us for more fun upcoming events and activities!

- ▶ Keep in touch with everything that we are doing by signing up for our email list, or stop by the office during business hours to pick up flyers!
- ▶ Follow us on Facebook at **facebook.com/greatswamp**
- ▶ Or check us out on the web at www.greatswamp.org
- ▶ Have a picture of your newly installed wreath? We would love to see it! Send us your pictures to our Instagram **@greatswampnj**, and we'll share them!



Enjoy your new
seasonal wreaths!

