**Sustainable Gardening Tour 2023**

**Interest Form**

The second annual Sustainable Gardening Tour hosted by Sustainable Blacksburg will be held on the third Sunday afternoon of the month starting in May until September (May 21, June 18, July 16, August 20 and September 17). Tour times will be determined by the garden host, but will start no earlier than 1:00 pm and no later than 6:00 pm.

If you are interested and available to host tour participants for a two or three-hour period on one of these Sunday afternoons, please provide the following information.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Preferred tour dates based on your availability and the best time of the season to view your garden: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ First choice \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Second choice

Preferred tour timeframe: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Provide a brief description of your garden (120 words or less), including highlights of sustainability features (see attachment for features that would be of interest to tour participants).

Is there convenient parking within a 5-minute walk of your property for 10-15 cars?

**Sustainable Gardening and Landscaping Practices**

1. Plant native plants that are adapted to local conditions. Native plants require less care and fewer resources.
2. Place plants where they will grow best (e.g., don’t put shade-loving plants where they will get too much sun).
3. Reduce lawn area because maintaining a lawn can use a tremendous amount of resources.
4. Promote biodiversity by planting a variety of plants. Look for native plants that support native pollinators, including host plants for caterpillars, because our pollinator species are in decline.
5. In addition to plants for pollinators, look for native plants that provide food sources for other native wildlife, like seeds and berries for birds, whose species are also in decline.
6. Provide water sources for wildlife, like a pond, bird bath or butterfly puddling area.
7. Provide places for wildlife to shelter and raise their young. See the National Wildlife Federation’s Habitat Certification program at <https://www.nwf.org/certify> for more details about landscaping for wildlife.
8. Reduce your food miles and packaging waste by growing some of your own, whether it’s in a big vegetable garden or a pot of herbs on a sunny windowsill.
9. Compost yard and kitchen waste. Instead of remaining forever in a landfill and emitting the greenhouse gas methane, these materials will break down and provide valuable nutrients to your soil.
10. Eliminate chemical pesticides and herbicides.
11. Practice integrated pest management. See<https://www.usda.gov/oce/pest/integrated-pest-management> for more information.
12. Use organic fertilizers.
13. Plant native trees to provide shade, soak up stormwater, store carbon and serve as a food source for native insects, which will in turn feed other native wildlife.
14. Plant trees or bushes as a windbreak to reduce winter heating bills.
15. Create a water-wise landscape. See<https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-713/426-713.html> for more information.
16. Capture rainwater in a rain barrel to reduce stormwater runoff and conserve water for irrigation.
17. Use drip irrigation or soaker hoses to conserve water.
18. Incorporate rainscaping features such as rain gardens, bioswales and rock dams to manage stormwater.
19. Use mulch to retain soil moisture.
20. Get a soil test before adding fertilizer or other amendments. See<https://www.soiltest.vt.edu/> for information and fees.
21. Remove non-native, invasive, plants and animals.
22. Keep your cat indoors because they are one of the biggest threats to birds.
23. Use repurposed items for garden borders, growing structures and decorative features.
24. If you have a stream or other natural water source, leave a “buffer strip” (riparian buffer) of plants along the edge to prevent erosion and reduce runoff of pollutants.