

SHANAHAN LANDSCAPING

Summer 2025 Newsletter

NCDOT Wildflower Program

by Mike Shanahan

The North Carolina Department of Transportation Wildflower Program had its humble beginnings in 1985 with just 12 acres. Today, at over 1,000 acres, wildflowers are installed and maintained by Roadside Environmental crews in the 14 highway divisions across the state. Many of the plantings are marked by a NCDOT Wildflower Program sign.

Here are a few noteworthy facts from the NCDOT about the program:

- ❁ Former First Lady Dottie Martin, wife of former Gov. Jim Martin, is credited with initiating the idea for the program after reading an article in the Wall Street Journal about wildflowers along Texas highways.
- ❁ The Wildflower Program plays a particularly important role in making the state an appealing destination for tourists. The program is one of the NCDOT's most popular initiatives.
- ❁ Today's Wildflower Program consists of one-third of each of the following: annuals, perennials, and NC native wildflowers.
- ❁ Native species planted each year along state roadsides, to name a few, include Clasp Coneflower (*Rudbeckia amplexicaulis*), Bur-Marigold (*Bidens aristosa*), Common Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*), and Maximilian Sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*).
- ❁ Wildflowers serve as sources of nectar for pollinator species including bees, butterflies and moths.
- ❁ The Garden Club of North Carolina is the lead sponsor of the Wildflower Program. Other important partners include NC State University and the NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services.

Revenue for the program is derived from two sources. The first is from the sale of personalized license plates, which is the primary source. The second is from direct contributions.

Thank you to everyone that make this program possible. It is one of the most recognized wildflower programs in the country.

Have a great summer, and for those of you visiting North Carolina or just passing through – welcome.



Native Plant of the Season

Bringing it Home with Native Plants!



Carolina Lily (*Lilium michauxii*)

- ❁ North Carolina's Official State Wildflower
- ❁ Red-orange-yellow flowers that are spotted
- ❁ Blooms primarily during July & August and sometimes into September and October
- ❁ Plants most commonly have 1-3 flowers but can have up to 6
- ❁ Grows throughout the state

Plant History



Claudia Alta Taylor 'Lady Bird' Johnson (1912-2007), former First Lady of the United States and wife of former President Lyndon B. Johnson, was a lover of nature, an environmentalist, and a conservationist. She is known for being instrumental in advocating for the Highway Beautification Act of 1965, which was nicknamed "Lady Bird's Bill." In 1982, she gave \$125,000 and 60 acres of land to help establish the National Wildflower Research Center in Austin, Texas, known today as the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

School of Botany



North Carolina has over 2,300 herbaceous native wildflower species.

