

Native and Invasive Plant Use Policy – Administrative Regulation – Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources

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Purpose

The purpose of this administrative regulation is to promote the use of native plants and prohibit invasive plant installation at City-owned and maintained sites and facilities. Native plants enhance, maintain, and restore biodiversity; support native pollinators, butterflies, birds, and other wildlife; and sustain local ecosystems and environmental health. Invasive plants disrupt the ecology of native natural ecosystems and displace native plant and animal species.

Definitions

Invasive species – The USDA defines invasive species as an alien species whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.

Native species – The USDA defines a native Plant as one that is a part of the balance of nature that has developed over hundreds or thousands of years in a particular region or ecosystem. According to USDA, this definition should always be used with a geographic qualifier. For the purposes of this policy, native plants refer to those native to the Southeastern United States.

This Administrative Regulation

It shall be the policy of the City of Raleigh that when new or replacement plant materials are installed by the City, or by its contractors or subcontractors, in outdoor landscaped or conserved areas at any City-owned or maintained site or facility, the following standards shall apply:

1. To the maximum extent practicable, only the seeds and plants classified by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) as native to a state or county in the Southeastern US with a strong preference for plants the USDA has classified as native to North Carolina shall be used.
2. New and replacement plant material installed will strive to meet the threshold of 70% Native species by July 1st, 2026, but shall meet a minimum threshold of 50%. The *City of Raleigh's Guide to Native Plants* is available as a resource.
3. No species identified as invasive in North Carolina by the North Carolina Invasive Plant Council shall be planted in outdoor areas of any city-owned or maintained site or facility.
4. This policy shall apply in all instances—except where the City Manager or their designee determines that installation of a native plant species would not be practicable—or as noted below:
 - a. Plantings deemed and intended to be edible, including fruit-bearing trees and plants, vegetables, nuts, and seeds;
 - b. Non-native turf grass species used on athletic fields and lawns;
 - c. Plant species required or prohibited by state or federal regulations;
 - d. Plant species uniquely suited for soil or water remediation functions;
 - e. Plant species to be installed in botanical and historic gardens for demonstration, interpretation, or educational purposes. In cases when the use of non-native plant species is determined to be appropriate, only non-invasive plant species of a suitable type may be used.
 - f. Seed mixes required for soil stabilization as part of sediment and erosion control compliance. No species designated as a 'Severe Threat' invasive by the [*NC Erosion and Sediment Control Planning and Design Manual*](#) (Ch 6) can be used.
5. The City will maintain and leverage the expertise and leadership provided by the existing City of Raleigh Invasive Species Program to manage invasive species.
6. The City shall, through various means, educate the public about the importance of native plants and the negative impacts of invasive plants.

Individuals and Entities Affected by This Administrative Regulation

All City of Raleigh Departments responsible for projects that install new or replacement plants are affected by this regulation.

Responsibilities

The Natural Resources Superintendent, City Horticulturalist, and Urban Forester within the Parks and Natural Resources Division is responsible for providing technical assistance to all City of Raleigh Departments to ensure compliance with this policy.

All City of Raleigh Departments responsible for projects that install new or replacement plantings are responsible for reviewing planting plans to ensure compliance with this policy.

History and Updates

Date	Revision	Change	Reference Section
6/1/2026	Original	N/A	N/A

References, Related Documents, and Forms

[Citywide Policies | Corecon](#)

[City of Raleigh's Guide to Native Plants](#)

[NC Erosion and Sediment Control Planning and Design Manual](#)

LEGAL NOTICES

Nothing in this policy shall alter an employee's at-will status of employment with the City.

This policy shall not create liability on the part of the City or any officer or employee thereof for any personal injury or property damage that may result from reliance upon this policy or any administrative decision lawfully made pursuant to this policy.

If any provision of this policy is or becomes or is deemed to be invalid, illegal or unenforceable pursuant to applicable law, such provision shall be construed or deemed amended to conform to applicable laws, or if it cannot be so construed or deemed amended without materially altering the purpose or intent of the policy, such provision shall be stricken and the remainder of the policy shall remain in full force and effect.