Native Plants - - - - vs - - - - Nativars

If your goal is to preserve biodiversity in your backyard through preservation, restoration and to establish native plant communities your first choice should always be the straight species native plants.

A native plant is a plant species that occurs naturally in a region, habitat, or ecosystem

Natives have many advantages over nativars including adaptation to local soil and climate, preferred food for native insects; promote biodiversity, conservation, and stewardship of our natural world.

If you are working on restoration and conservation it is recommend that you choose the straight species of the native plant to replicate the natural ecosystem.  While there is still much to learn about nativars and their effects on the natural world one thing we understand native plants have co-evolved with local fauna for centuries and are proven beneficial.

Nativars are cultivars of native plants that have been propagated for specific “desirable” traits.

They are becoming increasingly popular as alternatives to native “straight species”.

A nativar is a result of artificial selection- its traits have been selected by humans for some particular need to improve on the natural. The colors, bloom size/ shape, and even their height have been altered for our gardens.

While a native freely propagates or self sows in the wild and in your garden a nativar cannot propagate naturally. On the other hand, nativars face many challenges such as a loss of genetic diversity, less adapted to local conditions, less likely to be pollinated and will not self sow.

While the use of some nativars in our home garden is acceptable it is important we understand the diminished benefits to our local wildlife, in particular pollinators.

Many times local nursery and garden centers do not carry the straight species of a plant and the only thing available is a nativar.

Choosing the nativar over an alien species from another country is preferable.

Resource:

Native Plants vs Nativars By: Stacey Wildberger

<http://capeconservationcorps.org/native-plants-vs-nativars/>