

Eco-Friendly Native Plant of the Month

JUNE 2017

NC NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

REEDY CREEK NATURE PRESERVE

Photos by Will Stuart and Lisa Tompkins



Ruby-throated hummingbird



Spigelia marilandica Indian Pink

Plant a showstopper in your garden

The red and yellow flowers of *Spigelia marilandica* are stunning, and a delightful way to introduce garden visitors to the extensive and varied native plant palate. Happily Indian Pink has become more widely available in the nursery trade and easier for home gardeners to find.

Claudia West and Thomas Rainer in their book, Planting in a Post Wild World, suggest using Indian Pink as a dynamic filler plant that can provide accents for a plant community. In this way the seeds will self sow throughout a bed or woodland

garden. Mature plants are about two feet tall. Group several together in a mass for greatest impact.

Growth and culture

Typically found in a woodland cove, Indian Pink can adapt to a variety of soil types and performs best in dappled shade. Consider planting it close to a door, window, or walkway where you can see these magnificent blooms. This is a good plant for the edges between sun and shade.

The plants are dormant in winter, and late to emerge. The red and yellow tubular flowers bloom April-June, and can often re-bloom in fall. As you might guess with the bright red flowers and tubular shape,

Spigelia marilandica is a hummingbird favorite and relies on hummingbirds for pollination.

The seeds form in pairs on the stalk and are explosively dehiscent—meaning as the seed ripens the capsules explode, distributing the seed far away from the parent plant and making seed collection tricky for native plant propagators. Note the clever “seed catchers” designed by Lisa Tompkins in the above photo.

Native uses and history

Another common name for *Spigelia marilandica* is Worm Grass, because it was historically used by Native Americans to expel worms. It was typically mixed with other herbs that acted as a laxative because the plant alone could be fatal in a large dose.

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