

PROTECT THE NATIVES

Biodiversity (*bi-o-dah-vur-suh-tee*) *n.*

A shortened form of “biological diversity,” it is the multiplicity of different species in an environment and the adaptability which is both between them and within each.

By overtaking native plant and wildlife habitats, invasive species contribute to the loss of biodiversity. The dependency of human beings on other life forms makes biodiversity very important for our well-being. It is a safety net that provides back-up sources for the necessities of human life. In their displacement of native species, invasives threaten biodiversity and thereby all of us.

When invasives escape from a garden into a wilderness area, the natural landscape there is changed—perhaps forever. Invasive plants, with few environmental enemies, overrun native plants: witness the destructive spread of Kudzu, Asian Wisteria, and English Ivy. The creatures that depend on native vegetation for food and shelter are often left hungry and homeless. Remember what Rachel Carson called a spring without wildlife? Imagine her response to an ecosystem without indigenous flora and fauna.

The beauty, natural history, and biodiversity of a region are altered by the onslaught of invasive species. The loss of past treasures is felt by everyone who enjoys nature, be they professional or amateur, outdoor or horticultural enthusiast, natural scientist or artist. All are indebted to the first line in defense of biodiversity: the enlightened, responsible gardeners who refuse to plant known invasive species.

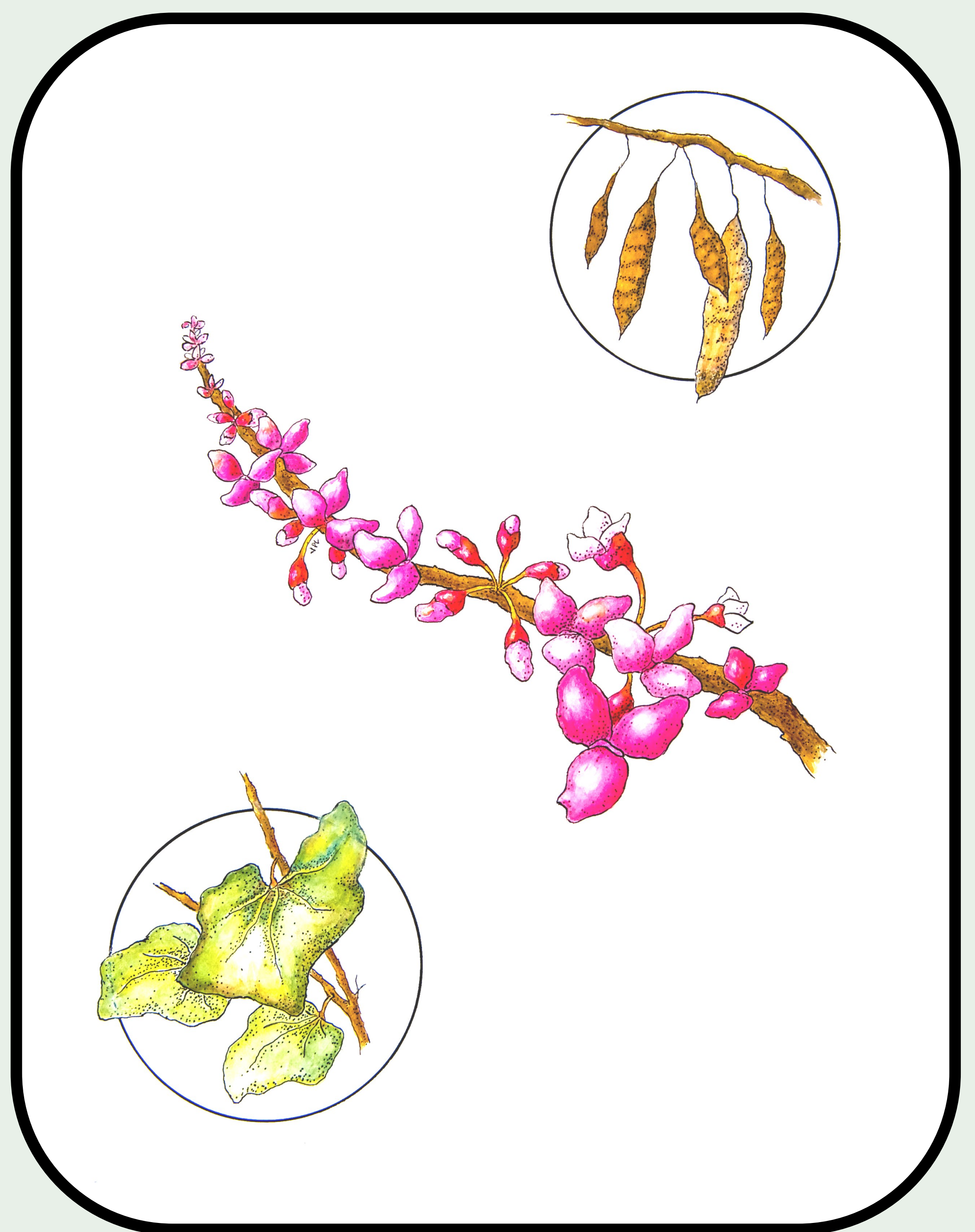


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Carolina Wren

Thryothorus ludovicianus

Birds such as this Carolina Wren love the Wax Myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*) for its food and shelter. Humans love this native shrub for its hardiness, fragrant evergreen leaves, and beautiful silver-blue berries, and for its year-round hospitality to our beloved birds!



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Redbud

Cercis canadensis

The native Redbud tree is prized for its early spring magenta blossoms. Its noteworthy heart-shaped leaves are commonly pale green, but some varieties produce leaves of other colors. Adding to its appeal are clusters of elongated, flat pods typical of the bean/pea family. Avoid invasives when looking for a tree to plant in rural, urban, or suburban settings. Choose, instead, the colorful and drought-tolerant Redbud and enjoy the satisfaction of protecting the natives.