2021 GCSC Native Plant of the Year

*Helianthus angustifolius*, commonly known as swamp sunflower, is the 2021 GCSC Native Plant of the Year. Nominated by the Magnolia Garden Club of Varnville, it is native to the south-central and eastern United States and is an upright perennial native wildflower that has bright, showy yellow flowers with brown disk centers. It can rapidly spread by rhizomes and seed and can also be propagated by clump division.

This low maintenance plant is not choosy about its soil and water requirements, growing best in full sun, also tolerating partial shade. It has no serious pests or disease problems and is unpalatable to deer and other herbivores. Since its mounds can grow between two and six feet tall and wide, it just needs plenty of room spread out.

Swamp sunflower is environmentally important to many various forms of wildlife. Native bees, wasps, beetles and butterflies are attracted to its nectar, and the plant is a host for the Silvery Checkerspot butterfly. Seeds provide food for the American goldfinch and many songbirds. Its branched stems and thick clumps provide excellent cover for many types of wildlife, and the plant helps control soil erosion.

Providing spectacular color until frost, this native has many landscape uses: serving as a background for a perennial or wildflower bed, establishing a border in front of evergreen plants, falling gracefully over a fence or wall, or creating a breathtaking display in a mass planting. Best of all, swamp sunflower delivers a glorious display of yellow daisy-like native flowers in late summer to fall when little else is blooming.

Both photos by Carmen Barnes, Magnolia Garden Club President