



Landscaping practices

Native Plants

What's the Problem?

Many landscapes require regular amounts of maintenance including watering, use of pesticides, use of fertilizer, and hands-on physical upkeep. Native landscapes are a low maintenance option for many different landscape needs.

Low-cost solutions

Selecting native plants is a low-cost option because it can require less time and money spent on maintenance.

What is a Native Plant?

A native plant is one that has evolved over thousands of years in a particular region, adapting to the geography, hydrology, and climate of that region. They occur in communities which provide habitat for a variety of native wildlife species.

Non-native plants are those that have been introduced, both accidentally and deliberately, into an environment in which they did not evolve. These plants often have no enemies or controls to limit their spread, and therefore impact their environment in many negative ways.

What are the Benefits of Using Native Plants?

Native plants can provide a beautiful and if selected correctly, contribute to a low maintenance landscape while benefiting the environment. They promote biodiversity, reduce air pollution, improve water quality, and reduce soil erosion. Once they are established, they can save time and money by reducing the need for fertilizers, pesticides, and regular irrigation.

Right Plant, Right Place . . . Even for Natives

Understanding the dependencies of plants on their native environment is critical in selecting the right plant for your landscape situation. Be wary of blanket statements taken out of context, such as native plants are more adaptable, and do not need water or fertilizer. There is tremendous resource potential for native plants that are more tolerant to biological and environmental stresses that often characterize the sites in which we expect them to perform. However, a native understory plant from an upland ecological system will not fair well on compacted clay in full sun. Native plant species are well adapted to our general climatic conditions, however soil conditions, sun/shade and exposure must be considered in their proper use.

SEMCOG

Our Water. Our Future.



Ours to Protect



Source: Wayne County Department of Environment

Avoiding the "Wild" Look

One of the reasons communities may avoid using more natural landscaping methods is that residents may think the areas are unkept vs. natural landscaping. Following are a few methods to assist in promoting the native look:

- **Create borders.** A fence, mowed path or other border can create a feeling of order to a naturalized landscape.
- **Promote native landscaping.** Inform residents through community web sites, newsletters, newspapers and signage about the benefits of the native landscaping.
- **Add human touches.** Consider putting in benches and other touches that invite people into the garden to enjoy the plants.

Weed Ordinance Issues

Some municipalities have weed ordinances to prevent unsightly or poorly maintained property. These ordinances generally require grass and/or weed control via height maximums. Sometimes weed ordinances can conflict with native plants due to these height restrictions. Native plantings do not pose the hazards that the weed laws are intended to address. Consider modifying weed ordinances to allow natural landscaping. One idea is to require a low-growing buffer strip (e.g. grass, ground cover) to make the landscape look planned.

Selecting Native Plants

Like any other plant we select and grow, native plants must be chosen with knowledge and carefully planted. Following are questions to ask when buying native plants:

1. Are the native plants locally grown (favored) or shipped in?
2. Have the seeds been propagated in a nursery (favored) or collected from the wild?
3. Will the native plants grow best in sun or shade?
4. What soil type is required?
5. Which native plants will grow well together (in a "plant community")?
6. How long will it take seeds to germinate or plants to mature?

List of Common Native Plants

Native Trees



Basswood, American Beech, Yellow Birch, Blackgum, Butternut, Eastern Red Cedar, Northern White Cedar, Wild Crabapple, Flowering Dogwood, Hackberry, Cockspur Hawthorn, Downy Hawthorn, Bitternut Hickory, Pignut Hickory, Shagbark Hickory, Ironwood, Black Maple, Red Maple, Silver Maple, Sugar Maple, Musclewood, Black Oak, Bur Oak, Chinkapin Oak, Dwarf Chinkapin Oak, Red Oak, Shingle Oak, Swamp White Oak, White Oak, Pawpaw, American Plum, Redbud, Sassafras, Sycamore, Tuliptree, and Black Walnut

Native Shrubs



Speckled Alder, Highbush Blackberry, American Bladdernut, Buttonbush, Chokeberry, Chokecherry, Creeping Strawberry Bush, Northern Dewberry, Alternate-leaf Dogwood, Gray Dogwood, Redosier Dogwood, Roundleaf Dogwood, Silky Dogwood, Red-berried Elder, American Elderberry, Gooseberry, American Hazelnut, Michigan Holly, Old Field Juniper, Leatherwood, Meadow-sweet, New Jersey Tea, Ninebark, Prickly Ash, Black Raspberry, Carolina Rose, Smooth Rose, Alleghany Serviceberry, Shadblow Serviceberry, Spicebush, Fragrant Sumac, Smooth Sumac, Staghorn Sumac, Winged Sumac, Downy Arrowwood, Maple Leaf Viburnum, Nannyberry, and Witchhazel

Native Perennials



Canada Anemone, Big Leaved Aster, New England Aster, Smooth Aster, Doll's-eyes Baneberry, Beebalm, Bellwort, Black-eyed Susan, Dwarf Blazing Star, Rough Blazing Star, Bloodroot, Blue-eyed Grass, Boneset, Cardinal Flower, Blue Cohosh, Columbine, Yellow Coneflower, Culver's Root, Dutchman's Breeches, False Dragonhead, Foam Flower, Wild Geranium, Wild Ginger, Golden Alexander, Golden Ragwort, Bluestem Goldenrod, Showy Goldenrod, Stiff Goldenrod, Round-lobed Hepatica, Hairy Beard Tongue, Ironweed, Jack-in-the-pulpit, Joe-pye Weed, Wild Leek, Michigan Lily, Blue Lobelia, Marsh Marigold, Mayapple, Early Meadow Rue, Tall Meadow Rue, Butterfly Milkweed, Common Milkweed, Swamp Milkweed, Miterwort, Mountain-mint, Nodding Wild Onion, Woodland Phlox, Prairie Dock, Rue Anemone, Sneezeweed, False Solomon's Seal, Starry false Solomon's Seal, True Solomon's Seal, Spiderwort, Spring Beauty, Steeple Bush, Wild Strawberry, Rough Sunflower, Woodland Sunflower, Sweet Black-eyed Susan, Thimbleweed, Trillium, Turtlehead, Blue Vervain, Hoary Vervain, and White Vervain

Native Vines

Prickly Greenbriar, Moonseed, Virginia Creeper, Virgin's Bower, and Wild Yam



Source: Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services

Cover photo: courtesy of Carlisle Wortman. Native perennial, Michigan Lily.

Top left photo: Adding a grass border can create a feeling of order to a naturalized landscape.

Top right photo: In order to promote the native look, consider adding human touches such as benches that invite people into the garden.

Back page photo: Consider using signage to encourage the use of native plants.

List of Common Native Plants (continued)

Native Ferns



Bracken Fern, Christmas Fern, Goldie's Woodfern, Maidenhair Fern, Northern Lady Fern, Ostrich Fern, and Sensitive Fern

Native Grasses, Rushes, & Sedges



Big Bluestem Grass, Bottlebrush Grass, Hardstem Bulrush, Indian Grass, Junegrass, Little Bluestem Grass, Path Rush, Pennsylvania Sedge, Prairie Cordgrass, Purple Lovegrass, Canada Wild Rye, Wild Rye, Switchgrass, Tussock Sedge, and Wool-grass

Source: City of Ann Arbor (www.a2gov.org). Pictures courtesy of Carlisle Wortman.



Source: Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services

Native Plants Supplies

The best source for finding reputable native plant suppliers is your state native plant or wildflower society (Wildflower Association of Michigan – www.wildflowersmich.org, Michigan Botanical Club – www.michbotclub.org). As native plants increase in popularity, an increasing number of landscape nurseries and garden centers are stocking them. Check with your local nursery for local sources of native plants.

Native Plants

Resources

Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Your Landscape and Our Natural Areas. Brochure.

Healthy Lawn and Garden Program. *Native Shrubs for Backyard Biodiversity*. Southeast Oakland County Resource Recovery Authority.

Oakland Conservation District. *Native Plants*.

Springfield Township, Michigan. Native Plant Information Sheets.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *Landscaping with Native Plants Factsheet*.

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