



Growing Your Own Wildflowers

Most wildflowers and native grasses can be easily grown from seed using simple propagation techniques; other species can be propagated by cutting and division. Seed and plants are readily available from local native growers. Native plants should not be dug from the wild. For the more adventurous gardener, seeds can be collected with permission of the landowner from local populations if you follow the rule of thirds: one-third for the seed bank, one-third for wildlife and one-third (or less) for your use. It is a good idea to refrain from collecting seed from the same population year after year.

Native plants can be cultivated in the garden setting as easily, if not more easily, as popular cultivars. Native plants are winter hardy and tolerate a wide variety of conditions. In most cases they require less water and care than cultivars. In addition, birds and butterflies prefer native plants for feeding and shelter.

A key to successful use of natives is location. Most can tolerate a range of soil conditions; although, watering will be required if using wet prairie plants in dry or mesic prairie soils. The daylight hours plants need are not as flexible. It is important to choose a site that matches the plants' light needs. Choosing a site that exceeds the plants' light needs may burn the plant and the plants will be out-competed by more light tolerant species. Choosing a site that does not provide enough light will cause plants to be stunted and eventually die out due to competition with shade tolerant species.

Propagation + Cultural Information

Botanical Name Common Name

Allium cernuum **Nodding Wild Onion**

Height: 1-2' | Bloom: May-June | Color: pink/white | Bloom: May-June | Habitat: MP/WP/S | Propagation information: st/vd
Notes: Great dried flower

Anemone virginiana **Tall Thimbleweed**

Height: 2-3' | Color: white | Bloom: June-Aug | Habitat: MP/S/W | Propagation information: st/x
Notes: Butterfly feeder

Asclepias tuberosa **Butterfly Weed**

Height: 1-3' | Color: orange | Bloom: July-Sept | Habitat: DP/S | Propagation information: st/x/hw
Notes: Monarch butterfly host and feeder

Aquilegia canadensis **Columbine**

Height: 1-3' | Color: orange | Bloom: May-June | Habitat: MP/WD/S | Propagation information: st
Notes: Butterfly and hummingbird feeder

Aster laevis **Sky Blue Aster**

Height: 1-4' | Color: blue | Bloom: Aug-Oct | Habitat: DP/MP/S | Propagation information: st
Notes: butterfly feeder

Aster novae-angliae **New England Aster**

Height: 1-4' | Color: purple + yellow | Bloom: Aug-Oct | Habitat: WP/MP | Propagation information: st
Notes: butterfly feeder

Aster umbellatus **Flat-topped Aster**

Height: 1-4' | Color: cream | Bloom: Aug-Oct | Habitat: WP/S/WW | Propagation information: st
Notes: butterfly feeder

Baptisia leucophaea **Cream indigo**

Height: 3-4' | Color: cream | Bloom: May-June | Habitat: DP/MP/S | Propagation information: sc/st/in

Boltonia asteroides **False Aster**

Height: 3-5' | Color: white | Bloom: Aug-Oct | Habitat: WW/S/MP | Propagation information: st
Notes: butterfly feeder

Campanula americana **Tall Bellflower**

Height: 2-6' | Color: blue | Bloom: July-Oct | Habitat: S/WD | Propagation information: st
Notes: butterfly feeder

Carex spp. **Sedge**

Height: 1-3' | Color: green/ gold | Bloom: May-July | Habitat: WP/MP | Propagation information: st/c
Notes: Skipper butterfly host

Coreopsis tripteris **Tall Coreopsis**

Height: 3-7' | Color: yellow | Bloom: July-Oct | Habitat: MP/S | Propagation information: st
Notes: butterfly and bird feeder

Dalea purpurea (Petalostemum purpureum) **Purple prairie clover**

Height: 1-2' | Color: purple | Bloom: June-Aug | Habitat: DP/MP | Propagation information: sc/in/st/g/dd/hw

Botanical Name Common Name

Dicentra cucullaria Dutchman's britches

Height: 6-12" | Color: white | Bloom: Apr-May | Habitat: WD/WW | Propagation information: fr/c/ns/vd

Notes: dormant all summer with no sign of plants above ground

Dodecatheon meadia Shooting star

Height: 8-24" | Color: pink + white | Bloom: Apr-June | Habitat: MP/S/WD | Propagation information: st/l/c/x

Notes: dormant all summer with no sign of plants above ground

Echinacea pallida Pale purple coneflower

Height: 2-3' | Color: purple | Bloom: June-Oct | Habitat: MP/D | Propagation information: st/l

Notes: Bird and butterfly feeder

Eryngium yuccifolium Rattlesnake master

Height: 1-4' | Color: green/white | Bloom: July-Aug | Habitat: DP/MP | Propagation information: st

Notes: Bird and butterfly feeder

Elymus virginicus Virginia Wild Rye

Height: 2-3" | Color: green/gold | Bloom: June-July | Habitat: S/MP/WW | Propagation information: st

Notes: good grass for shady places, bird cover

Eupatorium purpureum Savanna Joe Pye

Height: 3-6' | Color: dusty pink | Bloom: July Aug | Habitat: WW/S/MP | Propagation information: st

Notes: butterfly feeder

Gentiana Andrewsii Bottle gentian

Height: 1-3' | Color: blue/purple | Bloom: Aug-Oct | Habitat: WP/MP | Propagation information: st/l

Notes: bumble bees put on a great show pollinating these flowers, wonderful late fall bloomer that tolerates hard frosts

Iris virginiana shrevei Blue flag iris

Height: 1-3' | Color: blue + yellow Bloom: May-July | Habitat: WP/W/E | Propagation information: st 3 mos /g/vd

Notes: bird and butterfly feeder

Liatris pycnostachya Gay feather

Height: 2-4' | Color: purple | Bloom: July-Sept | Habitat: WP/MP | Propagation information: st

Notes: Bird and butterfly feeder

Lobelia cardinalis Cardinal flower

Height: 2-4' | Color: scarlet | Bloom: July-Sept | Habitat: W/WP/WW | Propagation information: st/l/x

Notes: Hummingbird feeder

Monarda fistulosa Wild bergamot

Height: 2-4' | Color: lavender / pink | Bloom: July-Aug | Habitat: WP/MP | Propagation information: st/vl

Notes: butterfly feeder, leaves and flowers make a refreshing tea

Napaea dioica Glade Mallow

Height: 3-6' | Color: white | Bloom: June-Aug | Habitat: WW/S/MP | Propagation information: st

Notes: butterfly feeder

Botanical Name Common Name

Aquilegia canadensis Columbine

Height: 1-3' | Color: orange | Bloom: May-June | Habitat: MP/WD/S | Propagation information: st

Notes: Butterfly and hummingbird feeder

Ratibida pinnata Yellow coneflower

Height: 1-4' | Color: yellow | Bloom: June-Aug | Habitat: WP/MP/DP | Propagation information: st

Notes: butterfly feeder

Penstemon digitalis Bearded Foxglove

Height: 1-4' | Color: white | Bloom: May-June | Habitat: DP/MP | Propagation information: st

Notes: butterfly feeder

Rosa spp Wild rose

Height: various | Color: pink-white | Bloom: June-Aug | Habitat: various | Propagation information: a/st/dd/vg

Notes: bird feeder

Rudbeckia triloba Brown-eyed Susan

Height: 1-4' | Color: yellow | Bloom: July-Aug | Habitat: DP/MP | Propagation information: st

Notes: butterfly feeder, biennial

Schizachyrium scoparium (Andropogon scoparius) Little blue stem

Height: 1-3' | Color: green + copper | Bloom: Aug-Oct | Habitat: DP/MP | Propagation information: st

Notes: beautiful fall and winter plant, excellent wildlife cover

Silphium integrifolium Rosin weed

Height: 3-7' | Color: yellow | Bloom: June-Sept | Habitat: MP/DP/S | Propagation information: st

Notes: bird and butterfly feeder

Solidago umlifolia Elm-leaved Goldenrod

Height: 1-4' | Color: yellow | Bloom: July-Oct | Habitat: MP/DP | Propagation information: st

Notes: bird and butterfly feeder

Tradescantia ohiensis Spiderwort

Height: 1-4' | Color: Blue | Bloom: April-July | Habitat: MP/WP/S | Propagation information: st 3 mos /c/g

Notes: juice from plant and flowers may stain clothing

Verbena stricta Hoary Vervain

Height: 1-3' | Color: lavender | Bloom: July-Sept | Habitat: MP/DP | Propagation information: st

Notes: biennial

Veronicastrum virginicum Culver's Root

Height: 3-5' | Color: white | Bloom: Aug-Oct | Habitat: WP/W | Propagation information: st

Notes: butterfly feeder

Zizia aptera Golden Alexander

Height: 1-2' | Color: yellow | Bloom: May-June | Habitat: MP/DP | Propagation information: st/c/dd/g

Notes: Swallowtail butterfly host plant

Propagation Information Key

- a - Soak seeds in very warm water
- c - Needs cool temperatures to germinate
- dd - After 1st seedlings are transplanted cool for 4 more weeks, to get 2nd germ
- fr - Sow fresh, soon after collection
- g - Germinates slowly over a few weeks
- in - Inoculate with spec. bacteria
- l - Needs light to germinate, sow shallowly
- sc - Scarify, scratch seed coating
- st - Mix with equal parts wet sand and seed, refrigerate for 4 – 6 weeks
- x - Susceptible to damping off
- hw - Over-winters poorly in pot; plant or bring indoors
- ns - Keep out of full sun
- vd - Vegetative method, divide older plants
- vg - Vegetative method, soft wood cutting
- vs - Vegetative method, Leaf cutting

Cultural Information Key

- DP - Dry prairie
- MP - Mesic prairie
- WP - Wet prairie
- W - Wetland
- E - Emergent
- S - Savanna
- WD - Woodland
- WW - Wet woodland

Suggested Reading

Boerner Botanical Gardens, Whitnall Park. 1974. **Prairie Propagation Handbook**. Milwaukee County Park System.

Smith, Robert J. and Smith, Beatrice S. 1980. **The Prairie Garden; 70 Native Plants You Can Grow in Town or Country**. The University of Wisconsin Press.

Birdseye, Clarence & Eleanor G. 1951. 1951. **Growing Woodland Plants**. Oxford University Press, Inc.

McClure, Susan. 1997. **The Hands on Gardener; Seeds and Propagation**. Smith & Hawken.

Cullina, William. 2000. **The New England Wild Flower Society Guide to Growing and Propagating Wildflowers of the United States and Canada**. Houghton Mifflin.

Recommended Field Guides for the Beginner

Peterson, Roger Tory and McKenny, Margaret. 1968. **Wildflowers; Northeastern / Northcentral North America**. Peterson Field Guides. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Brown, Lauren. 1979. **Grasses; An Identification Guide**. Roger Tory Peterson Institute. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Courtenay, Booth and Zimmerman, James H. 1978. **Wildflowers and Weeds; A Field Guide in Full Color**. Fireside, Simon & Schuster.

Embertson, Jane and Conrader, Jay M. 1979. **Pods; Wildflowers and Weeds in their Final Beauty**. Charles Scribner's Sons.