



Great Lakes
RESTORATION



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A Guide to Native Plants

Including a list of beautiful,
easy-care perennials for
home gardens.

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Black Eyed Susan & Switch Grass

Why Native Plants?

A combination of native plants can create a relatively low-maintenance garden. Native plants are acclimated to the area, unlike many exotic plants. This means they do not need much of the extra work required for most gardens to thrive. They are adapted to the harsh weather conditions of this area, surviving everything from week-long downpours and unusual cold to month-long droughts and extreme heat. They grow easily in sandy, clay, and gravel soils, and do not need supplements to adjust the pH of the soil. They are resistant to diseases and insects in the area, which will often extinguish the more vulnerable, non-native plant species. Native species live in this area for a reason, so why waste an opportunity to grow plants and flowers that are made to thrive in our area?

Native plants also provide food and shelter for native insect, bird and animal species. Losing a native species can be extremely detrimental to the environment and can disrupt entire ecosystems. Take Showy Goldenrod for example.

This plant hosts Golden Gall Wasp eggs in its own unique way. Right before she dies, the female Gall Wasp pokes a hole in the stem of the Showy



Credit: Warren Uxley

Downy Woodpecker on Goldenrod Gall

Goldenrod, depositing a single egg in the stem. The plant's reaction to this tiny intruder is to encase it in a hard ball of plant material, or a "gall". After emerging from the egg case, this little creature spends all winter within the safety of this little room inside the plant, growing and developing until it finally becomes an adult. When spring arrives, this adult wasp burrows its way out of the gall and spends its brief adult life crawling up and down goldenrod plants in search of a mate. This mutualistic symbiosis between the wasp and the plant has no negative effect on the Showy Goldenrod, as it continues to grow normally.

A Golden Gall Wasp's entire life revolves around goldenrod plants. Without Showy Goldenrod, not only would the Golden Gall Wasps die out, but the other species that rely on them would also perish. Without this species in the area, birds like chickadees and woodpeckers that eat insects would struggle to find food and their populations would decrease. Predators who feed on these birds would starve as well. Pest insects whose populations are normally kept in check by woodpeckers and chickadees would experience population explosions and begin to cause harm to other plants. Just by wiping out one native species, like Showy Goldenrod, the balance of natural life in the area would be thrown off, resulting in negative impacts to the entire ecosystem.

By growing native species in our gardens, we are helping to stabilize the balance of the ecosystem. In the controlled setting of our gardens, native plants can thrive in the conditions they are accustomed to, while being protected from invasive species that threaten to overpower them. In return, they bloom in bright, beautiful colors and attract birds, butterflies, and other creatures to our garden. Creating a garden with native plants is extremely rewarding and beneficial to all.



Native Joe Pye Weed, Prairie Coneflower, Ironweed

What is an Invasive Species?

- **Invasive species** are plants that cause environmental, agricultural or economic harm. Typically they are non-native species that have been brought to our country as ornamental additions to gardens or are brought in accidentally .
- Many of these plants spread aggressively, have no wildlife value, invade food crop lands and displace native plant populations.
- **Non-native or Exotic plants** also exist in our area, however, they do not pose environmental problems like invasive species. These plants are typically found in many home gardens.

Be a Native-Friendly Gardener! Avoid these commonly purchased aquatic invasive plants:

1. Purple Loosestrife
2. Yellow Flag Iris
3. Spearmint
4. Moneywort (Creeping Jenny)
5. True Forget-Me-Not

Native Plants For Your Garden

Perennials & Grasses:

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Purple Coneflower | Blue Flag Iris* |
| Milkweed Varieties | Coral Bells |
| Joe Pye Weed | Black Eyed Susan |
| Perennial Geranium | Phlox Varieties |
| Obedient Plant | Mountain Mints |
| Solomon's Seal | Penstemon |
| Cardinal Flower* | Bee Balm |
| Indian Grass | Hardy Hibiscus* |
| Switch Grass | Purple Love Grass |

Trees & Shrubs:

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Eastern White Pine | Serviceberry |
| Redbud | Red Osier Dogwood* |
| Sugar Maple | River Birch* |
| American Cranberry* | Elderberry* |
| Buttonbush* | Canada Hemlock |
| Ninebark | Winterberry |
| Blueberry | Oak Leaf Hydrangea |



Native Clematis & Virginia Creeper Vines

*These plants do well in Aquatic or Wetland areas.