

Illinois Native Plants for the Home Landscape

Illinois Native Plants

This brochure is a guide to the characteristics and benefits of selected Illinois plants to help home gardeners choose native plants appropriate for site-specific conditions. By using native plants in your landscape, you help support healthy ecosystems on land and water. Many are food sources for pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. Native plants promote clean water and conservation by reducing the need for garden inputs. They rarely require fertilizer and pesticides when planted in conditions similar to their natural ecosystems. Further, native plants have extensive root systems that, once established, help them thrive without watering. For more information, visit the University of Illinois Extension Horticulture website: extension.illinois.edu/global/horticulture.

Tips for Successful Native Plantings

Whether you're a native plant purist or if you simply want to add them to your existing landscape, there are a few things to keep in mind:

1. For design inspiration, look to natural areas, although you may want to interpret your design for the property's scale, which is likely smaller. One strategy is to emphasize an iconic feature, such as a mass planting of Prairie Dropseed with seasonal flowers, to represent a prairie. Another approach is to contain the bed with a defined border. Whatever your design, check local municipal or homeowner's association ordinances to ensure compliance.
2. Know your property's site conditions. This informs which plants work best (or do not). Use this brochure to match your site's sun, moisture, and soil type to plants suited to those conditions.
3. Before digging, call JULIE at 811 or 800-892-0123 or visit www.illinois1call.com to place a local utility request. When you know it's safe to dig, start by preparing your garden bed.
4. If you are using small plugs, consider soaking them in a small bucket. It can be difficult to rehydrate them once they dry out.
5. To plant, dig a hole as deep and a little wider than the pot the plant came in. If the plant is root-bound, cutoff the bottom ¼ inch of the roots to stimulate new growth. Place the plant in the hole and backfill with soil. Be sure the level of the plant's soil matches the level of the ground around it.
6. Add 2 to 3 inches of natural shredded mulch, leaving a circle approximately 2 inches in diameter of bare soil around the stem.
7. Water your new plants every other day for two weeks if it doesn't rain. After two weeks, additional watering may be necessary if the weather is hot and dry.
8. Your native plant may not bloom in the first two years while it's busy putting down deep roots. To have color during perennial establishment, you can intermingle them with annuals.
9. Although native plants are often described as low maintenance, this does not mean no maintenance, especially in the first two years when they are establishing root systems. During this critical time, expect to pull weeds and to maintain the mulch layer to discourage unwanted plants.

A Selection of Illinois Native Wildflowers – Organized by bloom times from spring to fall.

- **Columbine** (Latin name *Aquilegia canadensis*) –
 - Full to part sun.
 - Dry to moist soil.
 - Red flowers in spring.
 - Attracts bees and hummingbirds.
 - Grows 2 to 3 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.

- Tolerates drought.
- Golden Alexanders (Latin name *Zizia aurea*) –
 - Full to part sun.
 - Moist soil.
 - Yellow flowers in spring.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies and is a host plant for caterpillars.
 - Grows 1 to 3 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.
- Foxglove Beardtongue (Latin name *Penstemon digitalis*) –
 - Full to part sun.
 - Mesic soil.
 - White flowers in spring.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies and is a host plant for caterpillars.
 - Grows 2 to 3 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought but may yellow and droop.
- Wild Quinine (Latin name *Parthenium integrifolium*) –
 - Full sun.
 - Mesic soil.
 - White flowers late spring through summer.
 - Attracts bees.
 - Grows 1 to 3 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought but may yellow and droop.
- Sullivan's Milkweed (Latin name *Asclepias sullivantii*) –
 - Full sun.
 - Moist to mesic soil.
 - Dusty pink flowers late spring into early summer.
 - Attracts bees, butterflies and hummingbirds, and is a host plant for the Monarch butterfly.
 - Grows 2 to 3 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Not drought tolerant.
- White Wild Indigo (Latin name *Baptisia alba*) –
 - Full sun.
 - Moist to mesic soil.
 - White flowers late spring into early summer.
 - Attracts bees and is a host plant for caterpillars.
 - Grows 3 to 6 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.
- New Jersey Tea (Latin name *Ceanothus americanus*) –
 - Full to part sun.
 - Mesic soil.
 - White flowers late spring into early summer.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies and is a host plant for caterpillars.
 - Grows 2 to 3 feet tall and 1 to 3 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.
- Purple Prairie Clover (Latin name *Dalea purpurea*) –
 - Full sun.
 - Dry to mesic soil.
 - Purple flowers late spring into early summer.

- Attracts bees and butterflies.
- Grows 1 to 3 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
- Tolerates drought.
- **Pale Purple Coneflower** (Latin name *Echinacea pallida*) –
 - Full sun.
 - Dry to mesic soil.
 - Pink flowers late spring into summer.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies and is a host plant for caterpillars.
 - Grows 1 to 3 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.
- **False Sunflower** (Latin name *Heliopsis helianthoides*) –
 - Full sun.
 - Moist to mesic soil.
 - Yellow flowers late spring into early fall.
 - Attracts bees, butterflies and birds.
 - Grows 3 to 5 feet tall and 1 to 3 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.
- **Grey-Headed Coneflower** (Latin name *Ratibida pinnata*) –
 - Full sun.
 - Mesic soil.
 - Yellow flowers late spring into early fall.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies and is a host plant for caterpillars.
 - Grows 2 to 4 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.
- **Black Eyed Susan** (Latin name *Rudbeckia fulgida*) –
 - Full sun.
 - Mesic soil.
 - Yellow flowers late spring into early fall.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies.
 - Grows 2 to 3 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.
- **Swamp Milkweed** (Latin name *Asclepias incarnata*) –
 - Full to part sun.
 - Wet to moist soil.
 - Dusty pink flowers in summer.
 - Attracts bees, butterflies and hummingbirds and is a host plant for the Monarch butterfly.
 - Grows 3 to 5 feet tall and 1 to 3 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought but may yellow and droop.
- **Poke Milkweed** (Latin name *Asclepias exaltata*) –
 - Part sun.
 - Mesic soil.
 - White flowers in summer.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies and is a host plant for the Monarch butterfly.
 - Grows 2 to 6 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought but may yellow and droop.
- **Orange Butterflyweed** (Latin name *Asclepias tuberosa*) –
 - Full sun.

- Dry to mesic soil.
- Orange flowers in summer.
- Attracts bees, butterflies and hummingbirds and is a host plant for the Monarch butterfly.
- Grows 1 to 3 feet tall and 1 to 3 feet wide.
- Tolerates drought.
- **Wild Bergamot** (Latin name *Monarda fistulosa*) –
 - Full to part sun.
 - Moist to mesic soil.
 - Dusty purple flowers in summer.
 - Attracts bees, butterflies and hummingbirds.
 - Grows 2 to 4 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought but may yellow and droop.
- **Compass Plant** (Latin name *Silphium laciniatum*) –
 - Full sun.
 - Moist to mesic soil.
 - Yellow flowers in summer.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies.
 - Grows 6 to 12 feet tall and 1 to 3 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.
- **Common Mountain Mint** (Latin name *Pycnanthemum virginianum*) –
 - Full to part sun.
 - Moist to mesic soil.
 - White flowers late summer into early fall.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies.
 - Grows 1 to 3 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought but may yellow and droop.
- **Rattlesnake Master** (Latin name *Eryngium yuccifolium*) –
 - Full sun.
 - Moist to mesic soil.
 - Green flowers summer into fall.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies.
 - Grows 2 to 5 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought but may yellow and droop.
- **Purple Joe Pye Weed** (Latin name *Eutrochium purpureum*) –
 - Part sun.
 - Moist to wet soil.
 - Pink flowers summer into early fall.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies.
 - Grows 3 to 7 feet tall and 3 to 4 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought but may yellow and droop.
- **Prairie Blazing Star** (Latin name *Liatris pycnostachya*) –
 - Full to part sun.
 - Moist to mesic soil.
 - Pink flowers summer into early fall.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies.
 - Grows 2 to 4 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought but may yellow and droop.

- **Obedient Plant** (Latin name *Physostegia virginiana*) –
 - Part to part sun.
 - Moist to mesic soil.
 - Pink flowers summer into early fall.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies and hummingbirds.
 - Grows 2 to 6 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide.
 - Does not tolerate drought.
- **Great Blue Lobelia** (Latin name *Lobelia siphilitica*) –
 - Part sun to shade.
 - Moist to mesic soil.
 - Blue flowers summer into early fall.
 - Attracts bees and birds.
 - Grows 2 to 3 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.
- **Missouri Ironweed** (Latin name *Vernonia missurica*) –
 - Full to part sun.
 - Moist to mesic soil.
 - Purple flowers late summer into early fall.
 - Attracts bees, butterflies (especially migrating Monarchs) and hummingbirds.
 - Grows 1 to 3 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought but may yellow and droop.
- **Rough Blazing Star** (Latin name *Liatris aspera*) –
 - Full sun.
 - Mesic to dry soil.
 - Pink flowers late summer into early fall.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies, especially migrating Monarchs.
 - Grows 2 to 5 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.
- **Smooth Blue Aster** (Latin name *Symphyotrichum laeve*) –
 - Full to part sun.
 - Mesic soil.
 - Pink flowers late summer though fall.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies and is a host plant for caterpillars.
 - Grows 2 to 3 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.
- **Elm-Leaved Goldenrod** (Latin name *Solidago Ulmifolia*) –
 - Part sun.
 - Moist to mesic soil.
 - Yellow flowers in fall.
 - Attracts bees, butterflies and birds.
 - Grows 1 to 3 feet tall and 1 to 3 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.
- **New England Aster** (Latin name *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*) –
 - Full to part sun.
 - Moist to mesic soil.
 - Pink or purple flowers in fall.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies and is a host plant for caterpillars.

- Grows 2 to 4 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide.
- Tolerates drought but may yellow and droop.
- **Prairie Blazing Star** (Latin name *Liatis pycnostachya*) –
 - Full to part sun.
 - Moist to mesic soil.
 - Pink flowers summer into early fall.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies.
 - Grows 2 to 4 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought but may yellow and droop.
- **Short's Aster** (Latin name *Symphyotrichum shortii*) –
 - Part sun.
 - Mesic soil.
 - White flowers in fall.
 - Attracts bees and butterflies.
 - Grows 2 to 4 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.

A Selection of Illinois Native Grasses and Sedges – Organized by height, short to tall.

- **Pennsylvania Sedge** (Latin name *Carex pensylvanica*) –
 - Part sun to shade.
 - Moist to dry soil.
 - Semi-evergreen.
 - Attracts birds.
 - Grows ½ to 1 foot tall and ½ to 1 foot wide.
 - Tolerates drought.
- **Prairie Dropseed** (Latin name *Sporobolus heterolepis*) –
 - Full sun.
 - Dry to mesic soil.
 - Attracts birds.
 - Grows 2 to 3 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.
- **Gray's Sedge** (Latin name *Carex grayi*) –
 - Part sun.
 - Wet to moist soil.
 - Attracts birds.
 - Grows 2 to 3 feet tall and 1 to 2 feet wide.
 - Does not tolerate drought.
- **Little Bluestem** (Latin name *Schizachyrium scoparium*) –
 - Full sun.
 - Dry to mesic soil.
 - Attracts birds and is a host plant for caterpillars.
 - Grows 2 to 4 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.
- **Indian Grass** (Latin name *Sorghastrum nutans*) –
 - Full to part sun.

- Moist to mesic soil.
- Attracts birds and is a host plant for caterpillars.
- Grows 3 to 7 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide.
- Tolerates drought but may yellow and droop.
- Big Bluestem (Latin name *Andropogon gerardii*) –
 - Full sun.
 - Moist to mesic soil.
 - Attracts birds and is a host plant for caterpillars.
 - Grows 3 to 8 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide.
 - Tolerates drought.

SOURCES:

ILLINOIS WILDFLOWERS: www.illinoiswildflowers.info

PRAIRIE MOON NURSERY: www.prairiemoon.com

MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN: www.missouribotanicalgarden.org

GARDENER EXPERIENCE

WHERE TO FIND PLANTS AND MORE INFORMATION

The plant palette is inspired by the Red Oak Rain Garden: <https://redoakraingarden.org/>. The Illinois Native Plant Society webpage lists sources of native plants: illinoisplants.org. For more information about plants, go to the University of Illinois Extension Horticulture website: extension.illinois.edu/global/horticulture.

PUT YOUR NATIVE PLANT GARDEN ON THE MAP

You can be part of a network of native plantings by registering your Illinois native plant garden or rain garden. This helps build community and encourage native plant use. Add your native plant garden to the map: go.illinois.edu/GardenMap.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Funding provided by Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant.

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