

Wildflowers in Your Garden

I. Growing wildflowers in a garden: Learn the lingo:

A. Pinning down "wild"

- Wild: Native to a given situation or non-native but naturalized there in situations similar to its native region
- Genotype: Varying genetic make-up of individuals and groups within a species
- Provenance: Place of origin.
- Native: Species that inhabited an area prior to human arrivals from other continents
- Exotic: Non-native that will generally not persist locally without human intervention.

B. About light

- Sun: 6+ hours of sunlight per day
- Part shade: 4 - 6 hours of sunlight per day, usually season long
- Full shade/shade: 2 - 4 hours sun per day, usually less after trees leaf out
- Dense shade: Beneath evergreens or multiple layers of canopy
- Filtered light: High branched single layer canopy; some light all day
- Shade tolerant: Can survive or persist in shade but may not thrive or multiply freely.
- Shade loving: Adapted to full growth and reproduction in shade.

C. Habitat and habit descriptors

- Protected/Exposed: Degree to which a space is buffered against rapid environmental changes such as evaporative cooling and frost, drying wind, sharp drops or increases in temperature
- Drainage and soil moisture:
 - Well drained: Free water drops below an 18" depth of soil within 24 hours
 - Moist, well drained: Airy and always has some water available, always feels cool
 - Dry: Soil dries down between wettings. (Water is *not* absent.)
 - Wet: Soil is overly wet, with water filling even the air spaces
 - Marginal: Occurs at the edge of a body of water, sometimes flooded
- Colonizing: Plant spreads freely by seed or spreading vegetative part
- Invasive: Plant species that overwhelms other plants in its area.
- Long lived: Perennial species, individual of which regularly live more than 10 years.
- Ephemeral: An herbaceous plant species of individuals that develop, mature and re-enter dormancy in less than a full local growing season.
- Self-sufficient, naturalizing: Plant species that can be expected to persist on a given site without human intervention.

II. The Great Lakes region is especially rich in wildflowers

- Colonized from many directions after glaciers left it bare.
- Abundant, varied floral communities, many niches

III. Selecting wildflowers

A. Observe wildflower in the wild. Note soil, exposure, moisture, dominant- and companion plants

B. Seek site info, nativity info in books, on-line, at nature centers (see *Resource* list, pg. 5)

- Species identification: Focus on leaf characteristics and plant's overall height, shape
Bloom time should be a plus and just one key to I.D., not a primary driver

C. Do not think of them as superplants! "Easy" aspect is oversold.

IV. Obtaining plants

- A. Many nurseries and preservation association sales
 - Botanical gardens (Matthaei, Meier), other public gardens (Cranbrook, WildOnes)
 - Local garden centers
 - Mail order and on-line providers
 - See *Nursery Sources* list, pg. 6
 - Smaller plants often the best bet
- B. Wild collecting? Ethical, legal and practical implications
 1. Ethics
 - Will collection hurt or help the original plant's stability and continuation?
 - Will collection hurt or help that plant community?
 - Aggressive genotype from another region may out-grow locals of same species.
 2. Legal restrictions
 - Written permission on others' property (permits on public land)
 - Moving/ collecting *threatened* and *endangered* species regulated even on your own land
 3. Practical considerations
 - Keep roots intact and moist
 - Fill holes, water remaining plants
 - Plant quickly into compatible situation
 - Watch closely, re-locate if necessary

V. Design tips

- A. In sun:
 - Combine plants for contrasts in texture
 - Create a varied skyline -- not all one height
 - Natural seasonal progression is short to tall; tough to vary from this
- B. In shade:
 - Lay out generous paths first, and plant to create pools of light
 - Power of green, white and yellow
 - Practicality of drifts and quilts, and islands of height
 - Respect for visual impact of tree trunks
- C. Applicable to all locations:
 - Space -- void -- is beautiful. Place it in the plan!
 - Choose clump formers, or you *really* need a very large area

Native herbaceous plants (perennial "wildflowers")

Bold: Commonly Used Great Lakes Natives

Indented: Great Lakes Native Perennials Unusual but Becoming Available

Sun, **PS** part sun, **Shade**, **Wet**, **Moist**, **Dry**

Achillea millefolium (common yarrow/thousand-leaf yarrow) white, June, S, Dr-M

Actaea rubra (red baneberry) white, June, red berries, July, Sh, M

Anaphalis margaritacea (pearly everlasting) white, August, S, Dr-M, sandy

Andropogon scoparius, A. gerardii (big, little bluestem) S, Ps, M-Dr

Anemone canadensis (Canada anemone) white, June-July, Ps-S, M

Antennaria spp., A. parlinii (pussy toes/cat's paw) white, May-June, S-Ps, Dr-M, sandy

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Aquilegia canadensis (eastern columbine) red/yellow, May-June, Ps, M-W-Dr

Arisaema triphyllum (jack in the pulpit/memory root) green/maroon, May, Sh, M-W

Asarum canadense (wild ginger) maroon, April-May, Sh-Ps, M

Asclepias incarnata (swamp milkweed) purple, July, S-Ps, W-M

Asclepias tuberosa (butterfly weed/orange glory plant) orange, Jul-Aug, S-Ps, Dr-M

Aster spp.

Aster ericoides (white aster, heath aster) white, July-August S, Dr-W

Aster lateriflorus (thousand leaf aster) white, August, Ps, M-W

Aster novae-angliae (New England aster) purple+, Aug.-Sept., S, M-W

Caltha palustris (marsh marigold) yellow, May, S-Ps, W

Camassia scilloides (eastern quamash) blue, May, S, M-W

Campanula rotundifolia (harebell/bellflower) violet, June-July, S-Ps, Dr-M

Caulophyllum thalictroides (blue cohosh/papoose root) blue leaf, yellow-green, May, Sh, M

Chelone glabra (turtlehead) white/pink, August, Ps-Sh, M-W

Claytonia virginiana (spring beauty) pink, April, Sh, M-Dr

Clematis virginiana (woodbine/wild clematis) white, Jul.-Aug., Ps-Sh, M-W

Clematis verticillaris (purple clematis) mauve, June, Ps-Sh, M

Coreopsis lanceolata (tickseed) 2-3', yellow, June-July, S-Ps, M-Dr

Coreopsis tripteris (tall tickseed) 8', yellow, July-August, S-Ps, Dr-

Cornus canadensis (bunchberry) white, May, S-Sh, M-W, acid soil

Dentaria diphylla (toothwort) white, May, Sh, M-W

Dicentra canadensis, D. cucularia (squirrel corn, Dutchman's breeches) white, April, Sh, M

Epilobium angustifolium (fireweed) violet, white, July, Ps-S, D-W

Erythronium canadense (dogtooth violet, trout lily) yellow, May, Sh, D-M

Euonymus obovatus (woodbine) Ps-Sh, M

Eupatorium maculatum (white snakeroot), white/mauve/purple, July, Ps-S, M-W

Eupatorium perfoliatum (boneset/white Joe Pye) white, August, Ps-S, M-W

Eupatorium purpureum (Joe Pye) mauve, August, Ps, M-W

Fragaria virginiana (wild strawberry) white, June, S-Ps, M-Dr

Gentiana andrewsii (closed gentian) blue, August-September, S-Ps, M-W

Helenium autumnale (Helen's flower/helenium) oranges, Aug.-Sept., S-Ps, M-W

Geranium maculatum (wild geranium/spotted cranesbill) violet, May-June, Sh-Ps, M

Geum rivale (purple water avens) purple, June, Ps-Sh, M-W

Helianthus divaricatus (woodland sunflower) yellow, August, Ps, Dr-M

Helianthus tuberosus (Jerusalem artichoke) yellow, August, moist S, M-W

Heliopsis helianthoides (false sunflower/ox-eye) yellow, July, S, M-W

Hepatica acutiloba, H. americana (liverwort, hepatica) violet, May, Sh, M

Hibiscus moscheutos/ palustris (rose mallow/marsh mallow) white/pink/rose, Aug., S, W

Iris versicolor (wild iris/blue flag) (northern areas) blue/violet, May-June, S, W-M

Iris virginiana (blue flag) S, W-M

Jeffersonia diphylla (twinleaf) white/green, April-May, Sh, M

Liatris cylindracea Ps, Dr, L. aspera S-Ps, Dr (blazing star) purple, July,

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Liatris spicata (gayfeather/blazing star) purple/white, July, S, W-M

Lilium michiganense (Michigan lily) orange, July-August, Ps-Sh, M-W

Lilium philadelphicum (wood lily) orange, July, Ps-S, W-Dr

Lithospermum caroliniense, L. canescens (hairy/ hoary puccoon) orange, July, S-Ps, Dr, sand

Lobelia cardinalis (cardinal flower/rebbirds) red, Jul.-Aug., Ps-Sh, M-W

Lobelia siphilitica (great blue lobelia) blue, July-August, Ps-Sh, M-W

Lupinus perennis (lupine) violet/pink/white, May-June, S-Ps, Dr

Lysimachia ciliata (fringed loosestrife) yellow, July, Ps-S-Sh, M-W

Maianthemum canadense (wild lily of the valley) white, May, Sh, M

Mertensia virginica (Virginia bluebells) blue, May, Ps, M-Dr

Mitchella repens (partridgeberry) white/orange-red, May/fall Sh, M

Monarda fistulosa (wild bergamot) mauve, July, S-Ps, Dr-M

Monarda didyma (bee balm) (St. Clair/Macomb only) S-Ps, M-W

Monarda punctata (dotted monarda/horsemint) cream, July-August, S-Ps, Dr-M

Nymphaea odorata, N. tuberosa (waterlily) white, June-July, S, W

Oenothera fruticosa (sundrops/day primrose) yellow, June, S, Dr-Mn

Opuntia humifusa (prickly pear cactus) yellow, July, S-Ps, Dr, sand

Osmunda regalis (royal fern) green, Ps-Sh, M-W

Panicum virgatum (switch grass) S, M-W

Parnassia glauca (grass of parnassus) white, July, S-Ps, M-W

Penstemon digitalis (beardtongue) white, June-July, S-Ps, M

Phlox divaricata (wild blue phlox) blue/violet, May-June, S-Ps, M-W

Physostegia virginiana (obedient plant/false dragonshead) pink/white, July, S-Ps, M-W

Podophyllum peltatum (mayapple) white, May, Sh-Ps, Dr-M

Polygonatum biflorum (Solomon's seal) white, May-June, Sh-Ps, M-Dr

Polygonum monspeliensis (rabbit's foot grass) S-Ps, M-Dr

Pycnanthemum virginianum (mountain mint) white/green, June-July, S, M-W

Ratibida pinnata (grey coneflower) yellow, July, S, M

Rudbeckia hirta, R. triloba, R. laciniata (black eye Susan) yellow, July, S-Ps, W-Dr

Sagittaria latifolia (arrowhead/duck potato) white, July, S, W

Sanguinaria canadensis (bloodroot) white, April, Sh, M

Silphium terebinthinaceum (prairie dock), S. perfoliatum (cup plant) yellow, August, S, M-W

Sisyrinchium angustifolium (blue eyed grass) blue, June, S-Ps, W-M

Smilacina racemosa (false Solomon seal) white, June, Sh-Ps, M-Dr

Solidago canadensis, 33 other spp.! (goldenrod) yellow, July-August, S, M-W

Solidago caesia (bluestem goldenrod) yellow, August-Sept., Ps-Sh, W-Dr

Sorghastrum nutans (Indian grass) Ps-S, Dr-M

Stylophorum diphyllum (celandine/celandine poppy) yellow, May-June, Sh, M-Dr

Symplocarpus foetidus (skunk cabbage) green/white, April, S-Ps, W

Tanacetum huronense (Huron tansy) yellow, June-July, S, Dr-M

Thalictrum dasycarpum (purple meadow rue) white, June-July, S-Ps, M-W

Tiarella cordifolia (foamflower) white, May, Sh-Ps, M-W

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Tradescantia ohiensis (spiderwort) violet/white, June, S-Ps, M-Dr

Trillium grandiflorum (trillium) white, May, Sh-Ps, M-Dr

Typha species: T. angustifolia, T. latifolia, T. minima (cattail) brown, July, S, W

Uvularia grandiflora (bellwort/merrybells) yellow, May, Sh, M

Verbena hastata (hoary vervain) violet, July, Ps, S, M-W

Veronicastrum virginicum (culver's root) white, July, PS-S, M

Viola pubescens, V. canadensis, V. pedata (violets, many spp.) S-Ps, M-Dr

Recommended resources:

Books, other publications:

Kirt, Russell R., *Prairie Plants of the Midwest: Identification and Ecology*, Stipes Publishing Company, Champaign, Illinois (1995)

Landscaping for Wildlife; Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/publications/books/index.html>

Lund, Harry C., *Michigan Wildflowers in Color*, Thunder Bay Press, Holt, MI 1998

Newcomb, Lawrence, *Newcomb's Wildflower Guide*, Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1977

Phillips, Harry R., *Growing and Propagating Wildflowers*, U. of North Carolina Press, 1985

Phillips, Norma, *The Root Book: How to Plant Wildflowers*, Norma Phillips 6700 Splithand Rd., Grand Rapids, Minnesota 55744

Simonds, Roberta L. & Henrietta H. Tweedie, *Wildflowers of the Great Lakes Region*, Stipes Publishing, Champaign, Illinois, 1997

Smith, Helen V., *Michigan Wildflowers*, Cranbrook Insti. of Science, Bldg Hills, MI, 1966

Voss, E.G., *Michigan Flora Part I, Michigan Flora Part II, Michigan Flora Part III*, Cranbrook Insitute of Science, 1978, 1985, 1999

Young, James A. & Cheryl G. Young, *Collecting, Processing and Germinating Seeds of Wildland Plants*, Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, 1986

Websites:

USDA website, native plants and ranges: <http://plants.usda.gov/>

Michigan Native Plant Producers Assoc. Nurseries, invasive species <http://www.mnppa.org/>

Michigan Department of Natural Resources: wildflowers, invasive species, wildlife, etc.

http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10370_12146---,00.html

Michigan Wildflower Viewing Guide: Where to see native plants by habitat type

www.michigandnr.com/publications/pdfs/huntingwildlifehabitat/guides/wildflower_guide.pdf

Michigan Natural Features Inventory, Plant Communities pages

<http://mnfi.anr.msu.edu/communities/index.cfm>

Illinois woodland wildflowers, good images and descriptions; by U of IL professor John Hilty

http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/woodland/woodland_index.htm

Collecting Native Plants Responsibly; re Michigan Christmas Greens Act for all plant

collecting on others' property; also re restrictions on collecting endangered or threatened species on any property -

<http://www.epa.gov/grtlakes/ecopage/springfieldtwp/Sheet4.pdf>

Nursery Sources for Great Lakes Native Species

Wholesale nurseries (W) and retail (R) which carry some of the species on our list:

- American Roots Native Plant Nursery, 1958 Hidden Lake Trail, Ortonville, MI 248-627-8525
www.americanrootswildflowers.com (R)
- Arrowhead Alpines, P.O. Box 857, 1310 N. Gregory Road, Fowlerville, MI 48836, (517) 223-3581
www.arrowheadalpines.com (R,W)
- Blazing Star Nursery, 2107 Edgewood Dr., Woodstock, IL 60098, (815) 338-4716 (W, R)
- Bluebird Nursery, P.O. Box 460, 519 Bryan Street, Clarkson, NE 68629, (800) 356-9164
www.bluebirdnursery.com(W)
- Forestfarm, 990 Tetherow Road, Williams, OR 97544-9599, (541) 846-7269
www.forestfarm.com (R)
- Hidden Savanna Nursery 18 N Van Kal St., Kalamazoo, MI 49009 269- 352-3876
www.hiddensavanna.com (R)
- Hortech, P.O.B. 533, Spring Lake, MI 49456-0533, (616) 842-1392
www.grownearthfriendly.com (W)
- Landscape Alternatives, 1465 N. Pascal Street, St. Paul, MN 55108-2337, (612) 488-3142
<http://www.landscapealternatives.com> (R, W)
- Michigan Wildflower Farm, 11770 Cutler Road, Portage, MI 48875, (517) 647-6010
www.michiganwildflowerfarm.com (R,W)
- Native Plant Nursery, P.O. Box 7841, Ann Arbor, MI 48107-7841 734-667-3260
www.nativeplant.com (R)
- Prairie Nursery, P.O. Box 306, Westfield, WI 53964, (608) 296-3679
www.prairienursery.com (R)
- Prairie Moon Nursery, 32115 Prairie Lane, Winona, MN 55987, 866-417-8156 (R)
- Sandhill Farm, 11250 Ten Mile Road NE, Rockford, MI 49341 616-691-8214 (R)
- The Natural Garden Inc., of Midwest Groundcovers, 6N800 Route 25, St. Charles, IL 60174,
(847) 742-1792
<http://www.naturalgardennatives.com/index.cfm/fuseaction/wheretobuy.find> (W)
- Walters Gardens, Inc. 1992 - 96th Avenue, P.O. Box 137, Zeeland, MI 49464, (616) 772-4697
(W)
- Wetlands Nursery, P.O. Box 14553, Saginaw, MI 48601 989-752-3492 (R)
- Wildflowers From Nature's Way, R.R. 1, Box 62, Woodburn, IA 50275, (515) 342-6246 (R)
- Wildtype Native Plant Nursery, 900 N. Every Road, Mason, MI 48854 517-244-1140
www.wildtypeplants.com (R)