

75 EASY-to-Grow Native Plants

General Growing Information

All of the native plants on this list make excellent garden plants. To assure your success with these wildflowers, select plants that best match the conditions of your site. Don't try to grow sun-loving plants in the shade and vice versa. In addition, amend your soils to suit the plant's cultivation requirements.

Moist-growing plants need soils that are moist, but well-drained (no standing water), with plenty of organic matter. If the soil is low in organic matter, several inches of compost, leaf mold, or well-aged cow manure should be dug into the soil to a depth of 8 inches or more before planting. An organic mulch should be applied every year to maintain soil fertility, conserve moisture, and suppress weeds. These plants should be well-watered until established.

Wet soils have standing water for a brief time in the spring, and constant soil moisture for the rest of the year. Boggy soils are wet for most of the year. Plants that grow in boggy soils are appropriate for the edge of a pond or stream, or in a low spot in a landscape that fills with water after rain.

Dry soil conditions occur when soils are sandy and/or low in organic matter. These conditions are common in coastal areas and around houses where topsoil was removed or compacted during construction. One to two inches of compost should be worked into the soil before planting. Plants (even drought-tolerant species) should be watered until established. Dry shade conditions also occur under the canopy of certain trees, such as maples, that are shallow-rooted and absorb moisture and nutrients from the upper layers of soil. A small amount of compost should be worked into the pockets of soil between the larger roots before planting in these conditions. In both situations, plants should be mulched and watered well until established.

Most of the species listed on these pages are growing at Garden in the Woods, the botanical garden of the New England Wild Flower Society, 180 Hemenway Road, Framingham, MA 01701; office (508) 877-7630, fax (508) 877-3658; e-mail newfs@newfs.org; website www.newfs.org. All of them are nursery propagated and are available for sale when the Garden is open — every day from April 15 to June 15, and Tuesday–Sunday from June 16 to October 31. Hours are 9 a.m.–5 p.m., with extended May hours to 7 p.m. For additional sources of propagated native plants, consult our publication, *Sources of Propagated Native Plants and Wildflowers*.

The bloom time, flower color, height, and other comments follow the name of each plant. The key to the cultivation requirements and to other plant characteristics is at the bottom of page 4.

Easy Native Plants For Shady Conditions - WOODLAND EDGES

The following plants grow in full- to part-shade. Full-shade sites, such as the north side of a building or under the canopy of trees, receive no direct sunlight for most of the growing season. Part-shade sites may get several hours of direct sunlight, but full-shade the rest of the day. These conditions typically occur on the east or west side of a building, woodland edge, or woodland opening.

Herbaceous Plants

Allium cernuum (Nodding Onion) July; Pink; 1–2 ft.; Part-shade to full sun. (shd)

Aquilegia canadensis (Wild Columbine) May; Red with yellow; 1 ft.; Part-shade. (shm, w)

Arisaema triphyllum (Jack-in-the-pulpit) May; Green with purple stripes; 2 ft.; Red berries in some years. (shm, n) **

Asarum canadense (Wild Ginger) Late April–May; Maroon (inconspicuous); 8 in.; Deciduous species with bold leaves, great with fine textured plants like Maidenhair Fern. (shm, g, n)

Aster acuminatus (Whorled Aster) July–Sept.; White; 18 in. (shm, w, n)

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Aster cordifolius (Blue Wood Aster) Sept.; Pale blue; 2 ft. (shd, w, n)

Aster divaricatus (White Wood Aster) July–Oct.; White; 1–3 ft. (shd, w, n)

Dennstaedtia punctilobula (Hay-scented Fern) Leaves grow singly, but spread rapidly from under ground rootstocks; Lacy, yellow-green leaves are fragrant when crushed. (shd, g, n) **

Athyrium filix-femina (Lady Fern) 2.5 ft.; Lacy, delicate leaves. (shm, n) **

Chelone lyonii (Pink Turtlehead) Aug.–Sept.; Pink; 2–3 ft.; Part-shade to full sun. (shm)

Chrysogonum virginianum (Green-and-gold) May–Sept.; Yellow; 8 in.; Part-shade to full sun. (shm, g)

Cimicifuga racemosa (Black Cohosh) July; White; 5–8 ft.; Tall spires of frilly white flowers add life to midsummer shade gardens. (shm, n)

Dicentra eximia (Wild Bleeding Heart) May–Sept.; Pink; 1 ft.; One of longest blooming natives; Finely cut foliage; Good moisture and deadheading insures longest bloom. (shm)

Geranium maculatum (Wild Geranium) May–June; Rose-purple; 1 ft.; Part-shade to full sun. (shm)

Gillenia trifoliata (Bowman's Root) June; White; 3 ft.; Delicate star-like flowers; Red fall foliage; Part-shade to sun. (shd, n)

Heuchera americana (Alumroot) May; Greenish; 2 ft. (shm, g)

Lobelia siphilitica (Great Lobelia) Aug.–Sept.; Blue; 2–3 ft. (shm, n)

Penstemon smallii (Small's Beard-tongue) June–July; Pink-purple; 2 ft. (shd)

Phlox stolonifera (Creeping Phlox) May; Pink-violet; 6 in. (shm, g)

Polystichum acrostichoides (Christmas Fern) 2 ft.; Shiny, evergreen leathery leaves. (shm, n) **

Sanguinaria canadensis (Bloodroot) April; White; 8 in. (shm, n) **

Sedum ternatum (Wild Stonecrop) May–June; White; 4 in. (shd, n)

Solidago caesia (Wreath Goldenrod) Aug.–Oct.; Yellow; 1–3 ft. (shm, shd, w, n)

Stylophorum diphyllum (Celandine Poppy) May; Yellow; 1 ft.; Part-shade only. (shm)

Tiarella cordifolia (Foamflower) May; White; 10 in.; Evergreen. (shm, shd, g)

Viola labradorica (Labrador Violet) May; Purple; 8 in.; Purple cast to leaves. (shm, g)

Shrubs

Hydrangea quercifolia (Oak-leaved Hydrangea) June; White turning rose; 6 ft.; Red fall foliage. (shm, shd)

Kalmia latifolia (Mountain Laurel) June; Pink/white; 3–8 ft.; Evergreen. (shm, shd, w, n) **

Leucothoe fontanesiana (Dog Hobble) May; White; to 6 ft.; Evergreen. (shm)

Lindera benzoin (Spicebush) Late April–May; Blooms before leaves come out; Yellow flowers, red fruit; to 12 ft. (shm, w, n)

Rhododendron arborescens (Sweet Azalea) July; White to light pink; to 9 ft.; Fragrant; Dark green leaves turn red in fall. (shm, n)

Rhododendron calendulaceum (Flame Azalea) June; Yellow, orange, or red; 2–15 ft.; Colors very variable; Slightly fragrant. (shm)

Rhododendron carolinianum (Carolina Rhododendron) Late May–June; Pale to deep pink; 6 ft.; Small, evergreen leaves. (shm)

Rhododendron catawbiense (Catawba Rhododendron) June; Magenta; 6 ft.; Evergreen. (shm)

Rhododendron maximum (Rosebay Rhododendron) July; Pink or white; 12–15 ft.; Large, evergreen leaves. (shm, n) **

Rubus odoratus (Pink-flowering Raspberry) June; Rose; 5 ft.; Thornless; May spread aggressively. (shm, w, n)

Vaccinium augustifolium (Lowbush Blueberry) May; White, sometimes tinged with pink; to 2 ft.; Sweet berries in summer; Red autumn foliage. (shd, w, n) **

Vaccinium corymbosum (Highbush Blueberry) May; White; Blue berries in summer; 6–8 ft. (shm, w, n)

Viburnum dentatum (Arrowwood Viburnum) May–June; White to cream; 6–8 ft.; Blue to blue-black berries; Part-shade only. (shd, w, n)

Viburnum trilobum (Highbush Cranberry) May; White; 6–10 ft.; Bright red berries held into winter; Part-shade only. (shm, w, n)

Easy Native Plants For Sunny Conditions

The following plants tolerate full sun. Full sun means at least six hours of direct sunlight a day, such as an open meadow or the south side of a building.

Herbaceous Plants

- Allium cernuum* (Nodding Onion) July; Pink; 1–2 ft.; Part-shade to full sun. (sd)
- Amsonia* spp. (Blue Star) Late May–June; Blue; 2–3 ft. (sm)
- Asclepias incarnata* (Swamp Milkweed) July–Aug.; Rose; 3 ft.; Attracts butterflies. (sm, sw, w)
- Asclepias tuberosa* (Butterfly Weed) July; Orange; 2 ft. (sd, w, n)
- Aster laevis* (Smooth Aster) Sept.; Light blue; 2 ft. (sm, sd, w, n)
- Aster novae-angliae* (New England Aster) Sept.; Deep violet; 3–6 ft.; Pink forms also available. (sm, w, n)
- Baptisia australis* (False Indigo) Late May–June; Blue; 4 ft. (sd)
- Boltonia asteroides* (Snowbank or Boltonia Aster) Sept.–Oct.; White; 4–5 ft.; Compact form of our native. (sd, sm, w, n)
- Chelone lyonii* (Pink Turtlehead) Aug.–Sept.; Pink; 2–3 ft.; Part-shade to full sun. (sw)
- Chrysogonum virginianum* (Green-and-gold) May–Sept.; Yellow; 8 in.; Part-shade to full sun. (sm, g)
- Echinacea purpurea* (Purple Coneflower) July; Pink-purple; 2–3 ft.; Infallible and dramatic, an all-time favorite native wildflower for sun. (sd, sm, w)
- Eupatorium* spp. Aug.; Purple or white; 5–8 ft.; Tall, dramatic species with massive heads of flowers on strong stems. (sm, sw, w, n)
- Euphorbia corollata* (Flowering Spurge) Aug.; White; 1–3 ft.; Clouds of small flowers resemble Baby's Breath; Brilliant orange fall color. (sd)
- Gentiana clausa* (Bottle Gentian) Sept.–Oct.; Blue; 18 in.; Frilly petal tips. (sm, n)**
- Geranium maculatum* (Wild Geranium) May–June; Rose-purple; 1 ft.; Part-shade to full sun. (sm, n)
- Gillenia trifoliata* (Bowman's Root) June; White; 3 ft.; Delicate star-like flowers; Red fall foliage; Part-shade to sun. (sm, n)
- Hibiscus moscheutos* (Common Rose Mallow) Aug.; Pink; 4 ft. Other *Hibiscus* spp. also easy to grow.
- Liatris* spp. (Blazing Star) All bloom in July–Aug.; Shades of purple; Species vary from 2–6 ft. (sd, sm, w)
- Lobelia cardinalis* (Cardinal Flower) Aug.–Sept.; Red; 2–3 ft.; Stunning crimson flowers on tall spikes; Self-sows. (sm, sw, w, n)
- Lobelia siphilitica* (Great Lobelia) Aug.–Sept.; Blue; 2–3 ft.; Blue spires spring from over-wintering rosetts; Dramatic plant rare in New England. (sm, sw, n)
- Matteuccia pensylvanica* (Ostrich Fern) 5 ft.; Dark green leaves resemble ostrich plume; Feathery fertile fronds are 2 ft., green then turning brown. (sw) **
- Monarda didyma* (Bee Balm) July; Red; 3 ft. (sm, w)
- Monarda punctata* (Horsemint) Aug.–Sept.; Pink-to-cream; 2 ft.; Showy, tiered bracts; Self-sows. (sd, w, n)
- Osmunda cinnamomea* (Cinnamon Fern) 3 ft.; Robust leaves; Fertile fronds separate and narrow, turning cinnamon-brown when ripe; Fiddleheads also cinnamon-colored as the leaf uncurls. (sw, n)**
- Osmunda regalis* (Royal Fern) 5 ft.; Large coarse leaves; Fertile leaflets at tips of leaves; Fiddleheads smooth and wine-colored. (sw, n)**
- Penstemon digitalis* (Beard-tongue) June; White; 3 ft.; Robust eastern species with glossy foliage often tinged with red. (sd, n)
- Physostegia virginiana* (False Dragonhead) July–Aug.; Pink; 3 ft.; White form also available. (sm, g, n)
- Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *sullivantii* (Black-eyed Susan) July–Aug.; Orange-yellow; 2 ft.; Perennial form of familiar New England native: *Rudbeckia hirta* (n) (biennial) also easy. (sd, sm, w)
- Silene caroliniana* ssp. *pensylvanica* (Carolina Pink) May; Pink; 8–12 in.; Good rock garden plant; Self-sows. (sd, n)
- Silphium* spp. (Rosinweed) July–Aug.; Yellow; 3–8 ft.; Drought-tolerant plants. (sm)

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- Sisyrinchium mucronatum* (Blue-eyed Grass) June; Blue; 8 in.; Not grass, but Iris relative; Starry flowers open during the day, close at night. (sm, n)
Stokesia laevis (Stokes Aster) June; Lavender-blue; 1 ft. (sm, w)
Trollius laxus ssp. *laxus* (Spreading Globeflower) April–May; Pale yellow; 1 ft.; Rare plant in New England, but easy to please if given adequate moisture. (sw, n)
Zizia aptera (Heart-leaved Alexanders) May–June; Yellow; 1 ft.; Evergreen leaves, flowers like Queen Anne's Lace, self sows. (sm, n)

Shrubs and Trees

Arctostaphylos uva-ursi (Bearberry) May; White; 5 in.; Evergreen; Red berries in fall. (sd, g, w)

* *Clethra alnifolia* (Sweet Pepperbush) July–Aug.; White, fragrant spikes of flowers; 3–10 ft.

Fothergilla gardenii (Dwarf Fothergilla) May; White; 3 ft.; Fragrant bottle-brush flower clusters; Yellow/orange/scarlet fall foliage. *Fothergilla major* similar but 5–7 ft. (sm, sw)

Ilex glabra (Inkberry) June; White (inconspicuous); 2–6 ft.; Single black berries on female shrubs; Evergreen holly. (sm, sw, w, n)

Ilex verticillata (Winterberry) June; White (inconspicuous) 6–10 ft.; Brilliant red berries on female shrubs in fall and winter. (sw, w)

Magnolia virginiana (Sweetbay Magnolia) May; White; 15 ft.; Fragrant; Not evergreen in New England. (sm, sw, w, n)

Myrica pensylvanica (Bayberry) April; Brown catkins not showy; 6 ft.; Aromatic foliage; Gray, waxy berries persist in winter. (sd, w, n)

Rubus odoratus (Pink-flowering Raspberry) June; Rose; 5 ft.; Thornless; May spread aggressively. (sm, w, n)

Sambucus canadensis (American Elderberry) June–July; White (black berries in late summer); 5–10 ft. (sm, n)

Viburnum dentatum (Arrowwood) June; White; 6 ft. Grows in part-shade also. (sd, w, n)

Viburnum trilobum (American Cranberrybush) May; White; 8–10 ft.; Red berries into winter. (sm, w, n)

Vaccinium corymbosum (Highbush Blueberry) May; White to pink; 6–8 ft. Delicious blue berries in summer. (sm, sw, w, n) **

Vaccinium macrocarpon (American Cranberry) June; White to pink; 6 in.; Evergreen. (sw, w, n)

Key To Symbols

- shd=shady, dry conditions
shm=shady, moist conditions
sd=sunny, dry conditions
sm=sunny, moist conditions
sw=sunny, wet conditions
g=good ground cover
n=New England native
w=attractive to wildlife

**These species are sometimes wild-collected so please ask your supplier whether or not they have been nursery-propagated. Please buy only nursery-propagated plants.

Aronia melanocarpa - shrub
Waldsteria ternata - perennial
Redbud - tree



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