



**CORNELL  
COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION OF  
ONEIDA COUNTY**

## **HOME GROWN FACTS**

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### **Gardening with Natives**

Native plants are those trees, shrubs, vines, grasses, ferns, mosses and wildflowers that grow naturally in a region without having been introduced by man. Some wild plants have been naturalized, like Queen Anne's Lace or Ox-eye Daisy. Many of these plants were introduced by early European settlers.

Why garden with natives? Plants that are native to a region or specific area will not be as affected by the hot/cold extremes of your climate zone. Native plants are excellent for attracting a wide array of wildlife to your garden. Birds and butterflies will flock to your garden and stay for the abundant nectar, fruit and seeds of many native species. No matter what difficult area you are trying to fill in your garden, there is a native that is perfect for that spot.

You can create a woodland garden, Alpine meadow, prairie, bog, desert or dryland garden filled with natives. Shade, sun, wet, dry or anything in between, natives provide almost unlimited choices. Create the right soil and spot by using organic amendments as needed. Compost, manure, and shredded leaves can all help improve your soil. Embrace the spot, whether moist or partial shade, dry shade or sun, by choosing the right native.

Do you want to attract hummingbirds and butterflies? Try *Aquilegia canadensis* (wild Columbine) or *Chelone glabra* (Turtlehead) or *Lupinus perennis* (Blue lupine). Interested in attracting more birds? Plant *Amelanchier* (Serviceberry) or *Juniperus* (Juniper) for trees.

Who could imagine spring without *Sanguinaria canadensis* (Bloodroot) unfurling its grey-green leaves to the warming sun or the beloved *Trillium* (Wake-robin) and *Erythronium americanum* (Yellow Trout Lily)? As spring progresses into early summer, we welcome the flowers of *Physocarpus opulifolius* (Eastern Ninebark), which provides nectar for butterflies as well as fall fruit for the birds. *Filipendula rubra* (Queen of the Prairie) has airy pink flowers that add interest to the garden long after the flowers fade to brown.

As summer progresses, *Eupatorium* (Joe-Pye Weed), an often overlooked native, starts shooting up. We often see this plant, with its dusky pink blossoms, along streams or ditches as it loves moist or even wet spots. This impressive plant has many cultivars available ranging in size from 3 to 8 feet tall. *Veronicastrum virginicum* (Culver's Root, Bowman's Root) is also a good match for moist to wet sites for mid- to late summer.

#### **Helping You Put Knowledge to Work**

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As summer turns to fall, we see fields aglow with Solidago (Goldenrod). This is an underused garden plant, maybe because some people think it causes hayfever—it doesn't. Great fall color is also provided with Rhus (Sumac) yet we are slow to grow them in our garden. Check out some of the new cultivars available at local nurseries.

Plant breeders have tidied up and sized down many of our natives so they are better adapted to smaller gardens. Give a native or its cultivar a chance in your garden. Some nurseries specialize in natives, some have a native plant section, and many have plants tagged as natives. Remember, buy from reputable plant breeder. Never collect a native from the wild as this contributes to native plant decline, something with which we should all be concerned.

Discover more about native plants in these extensive resources:

- *Native Plants of the Northeast* by Donald J. Leopold
- *The New England Wild Flower Society Guide to Growing and Propagating Wildflowers of the United States and Canada* by William Cullina
- *Native Ferns, Moss and Grasses* by William Cullina

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