



Take Action! Plant Natives

Suggested below are a number of actions you can take to incorporate native plants into your landscape. Check off each as you complete it. Set a target date for accomplishing all of the recommended activities. Explore the Resources and Links we've provided for further guidance.

- 1. LEARN how native species are defined.** There are a number of definitions in use. Is it a plant historically found in your immediate region? Or one that is indigenous to your state? Or is it any plant that occurred in North America before European settlement? Choose your operational definition. This will help you select the plants you want in your habitat.
- 2. FAMILIARIZE yourself with plants considered native to your area.** Which may have been on the site where you now live. Contact local parks and arboreta, your local Audubon Chapter or Center, or your local native plant society for guidance. Take a hike in nearby natural areas to see native plants in their habitat.
- 3. DEVISE a plan before you plant.** Develop a map that shows elements of your property, such as structures and hardscapes (house, patio, paths), sunny/shady areas, sunlight, wet/dry areas, soil quality, etc. Choose a site on which to begin to incorporate native plantings. Is it in shade and suitable to a woodland garden? Is it in full sun calling for a butterfly garden? Is it constantly moist, calling for wetland plants? Remember that placing the proper plant in the proper site is a key to success.
- 4. PREPARE the site.** Loosen soil with shovels, garden fork, or tiller. Add several inches of compost. Or, you may want to minimize soil disturbance to keep weed seeds dormant and instead cover the site with a thick layer of mulch. Layers of black-and-white printed newspapers, at least five sheets thick, work well to prevent the sunlight from reaching the soil. Spread compost on top of the newspapers to create a planting bed. Soil organisms will eventually decompose the paper.
- 5. SELECT the plants you would like in your habitat.** You can simply pick the species you enjoy, or you can choose them according to the wildlife you'd like to attract. For instance, if you want to lure monarch butterflies, you would select milkweed, which is the only plant monarch larva feeds upon. Create a plant community with plants of varying growth habits and sizes. Make a list that you can take with you to nurseries or refer to while catalog shopping.
- 6. FIND sources for the plants you choose.** When you purchase plants, make sure they have been propagated at a nursery and not dug up from the wild. Many native grasses and meadow plants are germinated from seeds. Collect catalogs of native plant and seed suppliers, and check your local nurseries to see if they sell the native plants you've selected.

- ☐ **7. BEGIN planting!** Monitor soil moisture to ensure success of young plants. Remove invasive weeds that will aggressively compete for water and nutrients. Tolerate some insect damage. Gently dissuade hungry herbivores (rabbits, deer, etc.) from eating young plants. Once established, pull up a chair and watch them grow!

RESOURCES/LINKS

U.S. Department of Transportation

Federal Highway Administration, *Roadside Use of Native Plants - What is a Native Plant?*

Morse, L.E., J.M. Swearingen, J.M. Randall.

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rdsduse/rdsduse5.htm>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Native Plants and Gardening Links

List of native plant resources including native gardens, seed sources, and much more

http://plants.usda.gov/cgi_bin/links.cgi?earl=link_categories.cgi&category=linknative

North American Native Plant Society

List of native plant resources and organizations

<http://www.nanps.org/index.shtml>

U.S Environmental Protection Agency, Green Landscaping with Native Plants

Landscaping with Native Plants Factsheet

Excellent compendium of native plant information and resources

<http://www.epa.gov/greenacres/nativeplants/factsht.html>

Audubon At Home in Seattle: Gardening for Life

See Chapter 3 for step-by-step instructions for creating healthy backyard habitat including how to draw a base map of your property, designing a garden layout, and developing a planting plan.

http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/GardeningForLife.html

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Austin, Texas-based center, website includes image gallery and native plants database

www.wildflower.org