

Why 'Native' Gardening is Best

Gardening with plants native to your area has many advantages:

- Using plants adapted to your climate means **less watering** (especially important in drought-prone areas).
- Native plants are adapted to native insects and soils; **they don't need chemical pesticides and fertilizers** to protect and feed them.
- Native plant gardens **attract wildlife**. Birds use native plants for food (such as seeds and berries) and shelter. Native plants also attract many insects, another important food source for birds. Butterflies rely on specific native host plants as larval hosts; many butterfly caterpillars will only eat a few species of plants.
- Gardening with native plants **prevents the introduction and spread of invasive species**. Many invasive species were intentionally introduced as gardening plants. Unfortunately, the same characteristics that make a low-maintenance garden plant — hardy, fast-growing and easy to care for — often allow that plant to grow in natural areas and replace native vegetation. Study the contents of “wildflower” seed mixes carefully; many species in those mixes may not be native to your area and some can be invasive.
- Native plant gardens **maintain a sense of place**. Buying the same nursery plants no matter where you live might be easy, but gardens all over the country end up looking exactly the same. Native plants allow you to appreciate the unique landscape of your area, whether it's a colorful prairie in the summer, woodland ephemerals in the spring or the spare beauty of a desert.
- Finally, **native plants can be used in any style of garden**, from a formal landscape to a country cottage garden. In many parts of the country, you can even replace your lawn with native grasses (such as buffalo grass) that hardly ever need to be mowed!



Anemone



Blue lobelia

So How Do You Get Started?

- Go for a walk with a wildflower book and see what grows in nearby natural areas.
- Visit a local nursery that specializes in native plants.
- If you purchase native plants, be sure the plants are nursery grown – and not harvested from the wild.
- Ask local conservation groups and Audubon Societies if they are aware of any plant rescues in your region.
- Most states have a native plant society you can contact with questions (see below).

Visit: The North American Native Plant Society website for more info: <http://www.nanps.org/>

For info on Indiana and Michigan Societies:

INDIANA

Indiana Native Plant and Wildflower Society
PO Box 30317
Indianapolis, IN 46230-0317
<http://www.inpaws.org/>

MICHIGAN

Michigan Botanical Club
7951 Walnut Avenue,
Newaygo, MI 49337
<http://www.michbotclub.org/>