



## Toronto Master Gardeners

Toronto Master Gardeners are trained volunteers dedicated to providing horticultural information to the public.

For answers to horticultural questions contact the Toronto Master Gardeners' Info Line at the Toronto Botanical Garden (416) 397-1345 (Mon. to Fri. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Sat., Sun. and Holidays noon to 3 p.m.) or our website, [www.questions.torontomastergardeners.ca](http://www.questions.torontomastergardeners.ca).

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## Toronto Botanical Garden

Toronto Botanical Garden is a volunteer-based, charitable organization whose purpose is to inspire passion, respect and understanding of gardening, horticulture, the natural landscape and a healthy environment.

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## Native Wildflower Gardening

A wildflower is a plant that has not been hybridized or genetically modified by any gardener or botanist. It has the capability of reproducing itself from seed, and by runners, stolons or division. Following is an introduction to creating a native wildflower garden.

### Advantages of using native wildflowers

- Wildflowers survive the harsh winters without much cossetting, and thrive through the growing seasons without too much additional watering.
- Wildflowers have the genetic advantage of having adapted to your local microclimate.
- They have generally acquired a tolerance of, or a resistance to, pests and diseases.
- Native plants create a habitat or food source for wildlife, birds and insects that, in turn, are responsible for the plants' survival by pollinating or redistributing their seed.

### Preparation /Planting:

Your choice of plant will be governed by the amount of sunlight the plant will receive, the pH of the soil, and soil conditions (e.g. dry and well-drained soil or clay based and wet). The pH of the soil (acidity/alkalinity) can be altered but can be an ongoing time-consuming chore when large areas have to be considered. The pH can be ascertained by purchasing a home test kit available at most garden centres. Many

species of wildflowers are tolerant of soil acidity or alkalinity but others have very specific needs.

Consideration should be given to your lifestyle. If you spend most of the summer away, you may want to choose plants that bloom in spring or fall.

Native wildflowers can be used to create prairie or meadow gardens, woodland or shade gardens, rock gardens as well as bog or wetland gardens.

## **Maintenance:**

Choosing native plants does not mean a maintenance free garden but a low maintenance one if you make appropriate choices. All plants will need the addition of organic fertilizers during the growing season: leaf mold, compost, manures or an application of kelp or fish fertilizers. These will help to keep the plants healthy and resistant to pests and diseases.

Prairie and meadow gardens need mowing down to a height of 10-15 cm at the end of summer once seed has been set and dispersed or collected.

Woodland plants should be covered with leaves in the fall.

The use of pesticides should be avoided at all times:

## **Recommended Species:**

### *Spring-flowering woodland natives*

- Anemone *Anemone canadensis*
- Bloodroot *Sanguinaria canadensis*
- Dutchman's Breeches *Dicentra cucullaria*
- Foamflower *Tiarella cordifolia*

- Wild Ginger *Asarum canadense*
- Hepatica *Hepatica acutiloba*
- Jack in the Pulpit *Arisaema triphyllum*
- Spring Beauty *Claytonia virginica*
- Wild Sweet William *Phlox divaricata*
- Trillium *Trillium grandiflorum*
- Violet *Viola canadensis*
- Virginia Bluebells *Mertensia virginica*

### *Summer-flowering woodland natives*

- Black Snakeroot *Cimicifuga racemosa*
- Canada Lily *Lilium canadense*
- Heart-leaved Aster *Aster cordifolius*
- Jewelweed *Impatiens capensis*
- Woodland Sunflower *Helianthus divaricatus*

### *Woodland wildflowers that require acidic soil*

- Bluebead Lily *Clintonia borealis*
- Bunchberry *Cornus canadensis*
- Hepatica *Hepatica americana*
- Painted Trillium *Trillium undulatum*
- Partridgeberry *Mitchella repens*

### *Summer-flowering, sun-loving wildflowers*

- Beebalm *Monarda didyma*
- Beardtongue *Penstemon digitalis*

- Blazing Star *Liatris spicata*
- Black-eyed Susan *Rudbeckia hirta*
- Butterfly Milkweed *Asclepias tuberosa*
- Compass Plant *Silphium laciniatum*
- Culver's Root *Veronicastrum virginicum*
- Coneflower *Ratibida pinnata*
- Obedient Plant *Physostegia virginiana*
- Purple Coneflower *Echinacea purpurea*
- Evening Primrose *Oenothera biennis*
- Tickseed *Coreopsis lanceolata*
- Fall-flowering, sun-loving wildflowers . . .
- Aster *Aster novae-angliae*, *Aster laevis*
- Bottle Gentian *Gentiana andrewsii*

*Grasses to plant with natives for a prairie garden*

- Indian grass *Sorghastrum nutans*
- Little bluestem *Andropogon scoparius*
- Panic Grass *Panicum virgatum*
- Sideoats Grama *Bouteloua curtipendula*

*Moisture-Loving Wildflowers*

- Aster *Aster* spp.
- Blazing Star *Liatris spicata*
- Cardinal Flower *Lobelia cardinalis*
- Black Snakeroot *Cimicifuga racemosa*
- Blue Flag *Iris versicolor*

- Joe Pyeweed *Eupatorium purpureum*

*Wildflowers to attract hummingbirds*

- Columbine (wild varieties) *Aquilegia* spp.
- Jewelweed *Impatiens capensis*
- Beebalm *Monarda* spp.
- Cardinal Flower *Lobelia cardinalis*
- Trumpet Honeysuckle
- Butterfly Weed *Asclepias tuberosa*
- Wild Blue Phlox *Phlox divaricata*
- Virginia Bluebells *Mertensia virginica*
- Turtlehead *Chelone* spp.

*Wildflowers to attract Butterflies*

These plants will attract the larval and mature stages of butterflies.

- Butterfly/Swamp Milkweeds *Asclepias* spp.
- Wild Lupine *Lupinus perennis*
- Turtlehead *Chelone* spp.
- Wild Violets *Viola* spp.
- Black Snakeroot *Cimicifuga racemosa*
- Aster spp.
- Goldenrod *Solidago* spp.)
- Black-eyed Susan *Rudbeckia hirta*
- Blazing Star *Liatris spicata*
- Joe Pyeweed *Eupatorium maculatum*
- Wildflowers as groundcovers . . .

- Wintergreen Gaultheria procumbens
- Partridgeberry Mitchella repens
- Bunchberry Cornus canadensis
- Canada Anemone Anemone canadensis
- Mayapple Podphyllum peltatum

## Plant Sources

Sources of Wildflowers Plants can be obtained from specialized garden centres or by growing them from seed. Seed can be obtained from botanical gardens, seed companies, your own garden or from plants in the wild.

## Cautions and Considerations

Canadian Wildflower Society guidelines for plants collected from the wild:

1. Respect wild, native plants and do not disrupt plant communities.
2. Do not dig up native plants.
3. Use native plants, that have originated from your local bioregion. Grow them in the appropriate conditions to ensure their survival.
4. If you collect seeds from the wild, take only 10% of the seed from a common plant that is abundant. Buy seed only from companies that collect responsibly.
5. Only buy native plants from responsible companies or organizations that propagate their own.
6. Be cautious and knowledgeable in the use of exotic native plants and noxious weeds.

7. Avoid picking the flowers of native plants such as Jack in the Pulpit, Trilliums, wild orchids or Gentians as they will decline in vigor.
8. Notify the local Wildflower Society if an area with wildflowers is scheduled for development.
9. Plant native species that attract native fauna, especially butterflies, moths and birds that may be becoming more rare in your area.
10. Use natural means of fertilizing, weed and predator control

## Diseases and Pests:

Although native wildflowers are generally tolerant of, or resistant to pests and common diseases they still may be affected.

## Organic Management/Control Strategies:

The City of Toronto adopted a new municipal by-law (spring 2004) that restricts the use of pesticides. For details about the by-law visit the Pesticide by-law page on Toronto Public Health's Web site at [www.city.toronto.on.ca/pesticides](http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/pesticides) or [www.toronto.ca/health](http://www.toronto.ca/health). Questions may be e-mailed to [pesticide@toronto.ca](mailto:pesticide@toronto.ca).

As a general rule, good cultural practices that ensure optimal growing conditions, and good air circulation should minimize the risk of disease. Healthy plants, grown in appropriate conditions are less stressed and less vulnerable.

- Use only clean garden tools.
- Maintain a chemical free garden which will promote natural predators.

- Do not water over the heads of the plants, particularly in late afternoon.
- Rake up and destroy all diseased parts of plants and debris. Do not use this organic material as compost.
- Use mechanical control methods such as using a strong jet of water to knock off aphids, or liquid hand soap mixed with water.
- Visit your garden centre for natural predators or parasite that occur naturally to control a pest (e.g. diatomaceous earth for aphid and earwig control; *Steinernema carpocapsae* (microscopic nematode) will parasitize earwig larvae.)

Peterson and McKenny. *A Field Guide to Wildflowers - Northeastern /North Central/ North America*. Peterson Field Guide Series. Boston, U.S.A.: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968.

Newmaster, Stephen, Allan Harris and Linda Kershaw. *Wetland Plants of Ontario*. Edmonton, Alberta: Lone Pine, 1967.

## References:

The Toronto Botanical Garden Weston Family Library is an excellent source for horticultural information.

Johnson, Lorraine. *The Ontario Naturalized Garden - A Complete Guide to Using Native Plants*. Vancouver, Canada: Whitecap Books, 1995.

Cullina, William. *Growing and Propagating Wildflowers of the United States and Canada*. Boston, U. S. A.: Houghton and Mifflin Company, 2000.

Jones Jr., Samuel B. and Leonard E. Foote. *Gardening With Native Wild Flowers*. Portland, Oregon: Timber Press, 1990.

Factsheets are produced by the Toronto Master Gardeners in association with the Toronto Botanical Garden. They provide introductory information about a broad range of horticultural topics and are intended for personal use and study purposes. Should your gardening group or organization wish to use multiple copies we ask that you inform the Toronto Botanical Garden at [info@torontobotanicalgarden.ca](mailto:info@torontobotanicalgarden.ca).

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