

## What is a native plant?

A native plant is one that has been growing in our area since before European settlers arrived. These plants evolved and adapted to our local habitat and are critical parts of our ecosystem.

The USDA definition includes the following note:

The word native should always be used with a geographic qualifier (that is, native to New England [for example]). Only plants found in this country before European settlement are considered to be native to the United States.

<https://www.usda.gov/peoples-garden/gardening-advice/why-native-species-matter>

When purchasing plants, we should look for plants that are not only native to Missouri, but whenever possible, purchase plants native to northeast Missouri for the best results. There are links included at the end of this document that will help you choose the right plant for the right location.

## Why plant native plants?

Beyond the beauty of native wildflowers that bloom throughout the growing season, we plant native plants for a variety of reasons. Native plants are an important components in the life cycle of birds, and flying, crawling insects that are attracted to flowering plants aided in their pollination while also providing food for birds.

- preserves biodiversity as native plants support more native insects and birds than non-native plants
- provides food and shelter for pollinators, birds and small game
- reduces maintenance as natives are adapted to our soil and climate and do not require constant watering like non-native plants
- reduces pollution as the deep root systems of native plants reduces storm water run-off
- reduces invasive plant behavior better than non-natives
- allows us to enjoy the beauty of our native pollinators and wildlife that feed on native plants
- reduces the need for fertilizers and/or pesticides, unlike many common non-native plants.

## What is a pollinator?

Movement of pollen must occur for plants to become fertilized and produce fruits, seeds, and young plants. Flower pollination occurs through insects and animals—bees, wasps, moths, butterflies, flies, and birds.

## Why are pollinators important?

- One out of every three bites of food that you eat exists because of the efforts of pollinators, including many fruits, vegetables and seeds
- Three fourths of the world's flowering plants and about 15 percent of the world's food crops depend on animal pollinators to reproduce

- Pollinators not only are necessary for our own food, but support the food and habitat of birds and animals
- Some pollinators cannot survive without the presence of a specific plants or plant families such as the Monarch and Milkweeds. Similarly, some plants require specific pollinators
- Pollinators are in decline due to increased pesticide use, decrease in natural habitats and increases in non-native invasive plants.”

## How to get started?

It isn't always easy to know where to start. Doing some research will help, and we've included some great resources below. Another great way to start is to simply replace non-native plants with native plants in your current flower gardens whenever a non-native dies back and an opportunity arises to buy a new plant.

### MDC Guide: Getting Started on Your Landscape

<https://mdc.mo.gov/trees-plants/native-plants-your-landscape/getting-started-your-landscape>

### MDC Guide: Preparing and Maintaining Your Native Plant Site

<https://mdc.mo.gov/trees-plants/native-plants-your-landscape/preparing-maintaining-your-native-plant-site>

**Missouri Botanical Garden Manual**--*A collaborative project between the Missouri Department of Conservation and Shaw Nature Reserve.*

[Native Landscaping Manual](#)

## Looking for a Garden Plan and/plant lists?

**GrowNative!** is a great resource to find what you need for different types of garden spots. From sun to shade to water gardens and more, check out these garden plans:

<https://grownative.org/learn/native-landscape-plans/>

## Learn More About Pollinators

Missouri Department of Conservation has many resources for learning about pollinators in Missouri. The following is just one of many you can find on their website.

<https://mdc.mo.gov/your-property/improve-your-property/wildlife-management/pollinators>

Another great resource and wealth of information comes from the Xerces Society. Please visit their website to learn more and to download their publication:

## **"Native Plants for Pollinators and Beneficial Insects: Midwest Region"**

<https://xerces.org/publications/plant-lists/native-plants-for-pollinators-and-beneficial-insects-midwest>

### **Websites for Monarchs:**

<https://www.monarchwatch.org/>

<https://monarchjointventure.org/resources/downloads-and-links>

### **Websites for Wildlife:**

**GrowNative!** also has Top Ten lists of native plants for specific purposes. Per their website, **"The plants on each list are not ranked, that is, the tenth plant on the list is just as significant as the first one!"**

- [Grow Native! Top Ten Native Plants to Support Bees in Spring \(NEW!\)](#)
- [Grow Native! Top Ten Native Plants to Support Bees in Summer \(NEW!\)](#)
- [Grow Native! Top Ten Native Plants to Support Bees in Fall \(NEW!\)](#)
- [Grow Native! Top Ten Native Plants for Winter Pollinators](#)
- [Grow Native! Top Ten Native Plants to Attract Ruby-Throated Hummingbirds](#)
- [Grow Native! Top Ten List of Native Plants for Pollinators](#)
- [Grow Native! Top Ten List of Native Shrubs for Wildlife](#)
- [Grow Native! Top Ten List of Plants that Attract Abundant Wildlife](#)
- [Grow Native! Top Ten List of Native Nectar Plants for Butterflies](#)
- [Grow Native! Top Ten List of Best Plants for Butterflies and Moths](#)
- [Grow Native! Top Ten List of Native Water Garden Plants to Attract Dragonflies, Frogs, and Toads](#)

## **Additional Resources**

Please review the additional documents included in our Native Garden section on this website from *Monarch Joint Venture*, *GrowNative!*, *Missourians for Monarchs*, *Forrest Keeling Nursery*, *US Fish and Wildlife* to learn more about the importance of native plants and pollinators in Missouri.

### **Recommended Reading and/or Reference Books:**

- ***Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens.*** Tallamy, Douglas W. (2007).
- ***The Living Landscape: Designing for Beauty and Biodiversity in the Home Garden.*** Darke, Rick; Tallamy, Douglas W. (4 February 2016).
- ***Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation that Starts in Your Yard.*** Tallamy, Douglas W. (4 February 2020).
- ***The Nature of Oaks: The Rich Ecology of Our Most Essential Native Trees.*** Tallamy, Douglas W. (30 March 2021).
- ***Missouri Wildflowers.*** Edgar Denison

## Website Links of Interest:

- Native Plants
  - Deep Roots  
<https://deeproots.org/>
  - Grow Native  
<https://grownative.org/>
  - Missouri Botanical Garden  
<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/>
  - Shaw Nature Reserve  
<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/plan-your-visit/family-of-attractions/shaw-nature-reserve>
  - Wild Ones  
<https://wildones.org/> (There are 3 locations close to us, Columbia, St. Charles, and St. Louis)
- Plant Finder Links:
  - USDA Plant Database  
<https://plants.usda.gov/home>
  - Grow Native Plant Database  
<https://grownative.org/native-plant-database/>
  - Missouri Botanical Garden Plant Finder  
<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderSearch.aspx>
- Native Plant Nurseries:
  - Grow Native Resource Guide  
<https://grownative.org/resource-guide/>
  - Forrest Keeling Nursery  
<https://fknursery.com/>
  - Missouri Wildflowers Nursery  
<https://mowildflowers-net.3dcartstores.com/>