

Native Plant Starter Guide

Welcome to the world of native plants! By choosing native species, you're creating a low-maintenance, eco-friendly yard that supports local wildlife, conserves resources, and restores natural beauty. Here's a quick guide to help you get started:

1. What Are Native Plants?

Native plants are species that have evolved naturally in your region over thousands of years. They thrive in local conditions, support native pollinators, and require minimal resources compared to non-native plants.

Here are some examples of native plants from various regions in the US:

Mid-Atlantic (e.g., Maryland, Virginia)

- **Perennials:** Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
- **Grasses:** Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*), Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)
- **Shrubs:** Red Osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), Virginia Sweetspire (*Itea virginica*)

Northeast (e.g., New York, Pennsylvania)

- **Perennials:** Eastern Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), Foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*)
- **Grasses:** Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), Pennsylvania Sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*)
- **Shrubs:** Winterberry Holly (*Ilex verticillata*), Highbush Blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*)

Southeast (e.g., Florida, Georgia)

- **Perennials:** Fire Pink (*Silene virginica*), Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)
- **Grasses:** Muhly Grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*), Fakahatchee Grass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*)
- **Shrubs:** Sweetbay Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*), Wax Myrtle (*Morella cerifera*)

Midwest (e.g., Illinois, Wisconsin)

- **Perennials:** Prairie Blazing Star (*Liatris pycnostachya*), Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)
- **Grasses:** Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), Side-oats Grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*)
- **Shrubs:** American Hazelnut (*Corylus americana*), Ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*)

Southwest (e.g., Arizona, New Mexico)

- **Perennials:** Desert Marigold (*Baileya multiradiata*), Penstemon (*Penstemon* spp.)
- **Grasses:** Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), Tobosa Grass (*Hilaria mutica*)
- **Shrubs:** Creosote Bush (*Larrea tridentata*), Apache Plume (*Fallugia paradoxa*)

Pacific Northwest (e.g., Washington, Oregon)

- **Perennials:** Western Columbine (*Aquilegia formosa*), Sword Fern (*Polystichum munitum*)
- **Grasses:** Tufted Hairgrass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), Slender Wheatgrass (*Elymus trachycaulus*)
- **Shrubs:** Red-flowering Currant (*Ribes sanguineum*), Evergreen Huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum*)

California (Mediterranean Climate)

- **Perennials:** California Poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)
- **Grasses:** Deer Grass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*), Purple Needlegrass (*Stipa pulchra*)
- **Shrubs:** California Lilac (*Ceanothus* spp.), Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*)

Great Plains (e.g., Kansas, Nebraska)

- **Perennials:** Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*)
- **Grasses:** Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), Buffalo Grass (*Bouteloua dactyloides*)
- **Shrubs:** Leadplant (*Amorpha canescens*), Prairie Rose (*Rosa arkansana*)



Each region has a unique set of native plants adapted to its climate, soil, and ecosystems. Incorporating these into your yard not only enhances local biodiversity but also ensures that your landscaping thrives with minimal maintenance. Let me know if you'd like help choosing plants for a specific purpose or zone!

2. Why Go Native?

- **Support Wildlife:** Native plants provide essential food and shelter for local pollinators, birds, and beneficial insects.
- **Save Water:** These plants are adapted to your climate, meaning less irrigation is needed.
- **Prevent Soil Erosion:** Deep roots stabilize the soil and manage rainwater naturally.
- **Low Maintenance:** Native plants thrive with minimal care, reducing the need for fertilizers, pesticides, and mowing.

3. How to Get Started

1. **Assess Your Space:** Identify sunlight, soil type, and moisture levels in your yard.
2. **Choose the Right Plants:** Match plants to your site conditions. For example, switchgrass works well in sunny, dry areas, while ferns like Cinnamon Fern (*Osmundastrum cinnamomeum*) prefer shade and moisture.
3. **Plan for Layers:** Include a mix of groundcovers, shrubs, and trees to mimic natural ecosystems.
4. **Source Responsibly:** Purchase from local nurseries that specialize in native plants to ensure healthy, true-to-species plants.

4. Planting Tips

- **Timing:** Plant in spring or fall for the best establishment.
- **Preparation:** Remove invasive plants and amend soil only if necessary.
- **Spacing:** Allow room for growth—native plants often spread over time.
- **Mulching:** Use 2–3 inches of organic mulch to retain moisture and suppress weeds.

5. Keep It Sustainable

- Leave leaf litter to provide habitat for overwintering insects.
- Avoid chemical fertilizers and pesticides—they're unnecessary with native plants.
- Embrace "wild" areas; they're perfect for pollinators!



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With this starter guide, you're on your way to transforming your yard into a thriving native habitat. Every plant makes a difference—happy planting! 🌿