

Natural Garden Natives®



What is a native plant?

- Plants that have evolved and adapted for thousands of years in our specific region.
- Plants that form an ecosystem with nonliving and living things (other plants, soil, rocks, weather, birds, etc).
- Plants that are straight species only, not hybrids.

Why use native plants?

- Require no chemical fertilizers.
- Require little or no pesticides.
- Require little or no water, if sited correctly.
- Provide food and shelter for wildlife.
- Are long lived and adapted to our area's environmental conditions
- Provide ecological diversity.
- Improve water quality; reduces the runoff of chemicals into our lakes, ponds and streams.
- Studies show that a natural habitat improves our mental health.

Forbs & Grasses

- Forbs - A Plant that does not have grass-like leaves. Also has showy flowers.
- Grasses - Long, narrow leaves with parallel veining (Includes Sedges and Rushes).
- Forbs dominate in Spring to mid summer, grasses dominate in late summer to fall.

Choose the right plant for the right site

- Don't assume just because the plant is native it will do well anywhere.
- Native plants grow in specific conditions.
- Consider the amount of sun, moisture, drainage and type of soil.
- Consider the height, width, growth habit and bloom time.



Illinois - The Prairie State

Over 2/3 of the state was prairie, 22 million acres. Now Only 2000 acres of original prairie is left - that's 1/100 of 1%

| Native Plant Community/ Ecosystem | Description (Soil Type & Characteristics, Location) |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <i>Dry Prairie</i> | Less than 10% of a prairie community is covered by tree canopy, therefore the plants that grow in these communities thrive in full sun. Soils in dry prairie communities vary from fine-textured silt and clay loams to coarse-textured sandy loams and sandy or gravelly soils. All are well-drained and moisture conditions through the growing season are relatively dry. |
| <i>Mesic Prairie</i> | Full sun, less than 10% tree canopy; soil moisture is available throughout the growing season. Soil is comparable to a good garden soil. |
| <i>Savanna</i> | A wooded plant community with 10-50% tree canopy cover, dominated by grasses and sedges. Soils are typically fine-textured or sandy and transitional between prairie and woodland; conditions may be dry to mesic. The absence of both wet soils and fire promotes the presence of trees; full sun to partial shade. |
| <i>Woodland</i> | Shade to partial shade, 50-80% tree canopy cover but sufficient light to support the reproduction of tree canopy species and a woodland shrubs and herbaceous layer. Typically has a higher population of spring ephemerals than a savanna. Soil moisture can be dry to wet-mesic. Mesic woodland soils typically are more fertile than dryer woodland communities and therefore have different characteristic species. |
| <i>Wet Woodland</i> | Found on the floodplain of rivers and streams. The plant community is shaped by the frequency and duration of the flooding and can be more open. Summer conditions may be dry and plants of dry and dry-mesic soils may succeed on slight rises. Full shade, 80% tree canopy cover. |
| <i>Wet Prairie</i> | Full sun, less than 10% tree canopy; surface water is typically present during the winter and spring and the soil is almost always saturated. |



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